THE MAN of DESTINY

THOMAS GOLD FROST

O. M. Dubbs

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THE MAN OF DESTINY

THE RIDING CONTEST AT WEST POINT (Page 80)

The Man of Destiny

BY

THOMAS GOLD FROST

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY

S. NEMTZOFF

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BY
THOMAS GOLD FROST

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DEDICATED TO MY WIFE

MARY KENNEDY FROST

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PREFACE

THIS is primarily a work of fiction and only partakes incidentally of the character of an historical romance. The love theme herein presented is purely a creature of the author's imagination, set in a background of historic facts.

No one, of course, will fail to recognize in the great military leader of the Civil War the original of the character of Burton as found within these pages. In speaking of this great character—in a paraphrase of what was observed as to Disraeli—it may be asserted that his life was a romance, his romance was history and his whole career is a fiction founded on fact.

In proof of the truth of this statement, it is only necessary to observe that without the events of this great leader's life to lend verity to the story, many of the chapters of "The Man of Destiny" would give color to the suspicion that the writer's imaginative faculties had run away with his judgment. In one sense, this work is a tribute to the most marvelous and romantic career that was ever lived by an American citizen. In still another sense, it may be regarded as a serious attempt to interpret and illumine a great life, in the hope that the youth of this country, as well as those who count their own lives as failures, may draw hope and

aspiration from its pages. In all their broad and essential features, the events herein portrayed are taken literally out of the life of one of our fellow countrymen. In the non-essentials, particularly in matters of sentiment, the writer has intentionally and from motives which, it is hoped, all will understand, broken entirely away from the historical basis and drawn on the resources of the imagination.

Thus while the romantic incidents found within these pages are purely creations of fancy, still all will admit that they might be easily duplicated in the life-story of many a person living to-day.

On the other hand, it is the events herein portrayed which have their foundation in historical fact which are likely to tax the credulity of the reader. In brief, it all serves to show the verity of the trite saying, that "truth is stranger than fiction."

If all these things are borne in mind, much well-intentioned criticism may be thereby rendered unnecessary.

THE AUTHOR.

THE MAN OF DESTINY

CHAPTER I

A KENTUCKY BACKGROUND

On the Kentucky shore of the Ohio, some five miles from the picturesque village of Maysville, there juts out in bold relief from the high ridge behind, a wooded promontory known since pioneer days as "Indian Rock." Whatever the origin of the name—whether legendary or otherwise—it has been lost in the passing of the years. With its inviting carpet of grass and moss, accompanied by an unrivaled view of the beautiful valley of the Ohio below, it has long been the Mecca for many a holiday pilgrimage on the part of the inhabitants for miles around.

On a hazy afternoon in November, 1838, two youthful visitors might have been observed making their way on horseback along the winding trail that leads from the dusky pike below to the summit of the rock above. The one was a dark-haired, fair-faced girl, just budding into womanhood. The other, a sandy-maned, freckled lad of seventeen years or thereabouts. The summit

once attained they dismounted—allowing their horses to browse on the long grass that grew everywhere abundantly and then proceeded to drink in the scene that lay stretched out before their eyes. They were alone, free to enjoy in careless boy and girl fashion one of the fairest of Nature's pictures. The sun was slowly sinking in a bank of clouds in the west and great rays of slanting light fell upon the branches of the tall trees, bringing them out in bold relief, while the soft breezes wafted through their autumn-tinted leaves.

They stood silent for a moment, gazing in mute admiration up and down the valley, which, with the great river in its bosom, stretched away until it lost itself in the line of the horizon. In the lad's face an apparent stolidity had vanished, to make way for a look of boyish content, occasioned perhaps by some feeling of happiness, engendered in its turn by his unaccustomed vocation of cavalier to incipient womanhood. In the girl's, little else was to be observed, save enjoyment of the rarely beautiful scene which she was enjoying to the full.

To a rather unusual chain of circumstances was due their companionship on this warm autumn afternoon. The preceding summer had found the lad, Samuel Burton by name, living on a small Ohio farm with his parents, who were hard-working frontier people in very humble circumstances. It was at this time that an invitation had come from Mrs. Burton's brother—a well-to-do stock trader by the name of Thomas Carter —offering to take his nephew into his own home at Maysville, while in attendance at the "Academy" loca-

ted on the outskirts of that attractive Kentucky village. This offer had been gladly accepted, and for two months past "Sam," as the lad was called, had been a member of Mr. Carter's household. This last consisted of himself, his wife and only child—Julia—a girl about Sam's own age.

On the latter's arrival at the Carter home he found there a visitor—a young girl, Sallie Custis by name—who was his companion on the afternoon on which this story opens. Only a few months before she herself had left Vaucluse, the ancestral home of the Custis family, located on the west shore of the Chesapeake in Virginia, to accompany her father on a visit to a maternal uncle who for many years had made his home at Maysville. It was in this wise that she had first made the acquaintance of Burton's cousin, Julia Carter. The two girls had become such fast friends that when Judge Custis—Sallie's father—had announced his intention of returning home early in the fall, he had given a reluctant consent to his daughter's remaining a few months longer at Maysville as a visitor at the Carter home. His consent, however, had been obtained only upon the promise that his brother-in-law, Mr. Flandreau, should accompany his daughter on her homeward journey, which it was agreed should occur prior to the Christmas holidays.

Without recognizing it, "Sallie" Custis and "Sam" Burton were products of two distinct forms of civilization. She belonged to the cavaliers who boasted no prouder name than that of the Virginia Custises. He was of the Puritan stock, and was, as it were, a later

product of that restless spirit of adventure which had led his New England ancestors to leave the bleak shores of the North Atlantic, in order to reach the coveted promised land beyond. They were rude road-builders for the more refined but less rugged civilization that was to follow.

But the two young people who were enjoying the seductive pleasures of Indian Rock on this November afternoon, gave little thought to their progenitors of an age long since past and gone. They were too keenly sensitive to the allurements of the present to care much for the somber past. This does not mean that either one lacked consciousness of the difference—personal or otherwise—that existed in that puzzling social equation in which they were the known factors, or that they were oblivious of the fact that one of them at least had a highly respectable—if proportionately stupid—assortment of ancestors. Girl though she was, Sallie Custis saw clearly the limitations—both subjective and objective—which pertained to the personality of a backwoods farmer's boy of the Western frontier. She knew full well that with his shambling figure, homespun clothes, and stolid exterior, he would cut a sorry figure in comparison with the debonair "Hot-Spurs" of her own neighborhood at home. She knew, too, that he came perilously close to belonging to that despised class who were termed almost universally by the slaves of the South, "poor white trash." He was backward in his studies, painfully shy in the presence of strangers, and, to all appearances, was devoid of ambition. What then had brought about this intimacy between the strangely

assorted pair? A casual observer might have said that it was due solely to the far greater freedom of manners that existed in the Kentucky of that early day as contrasted with those of Virginia, of a contemporaneous period. For in the former, the youth of both sexes mingled together unchaperoned, with a freedom from conventional restraints which would have caused the first families of the older commonwealth to stand aghast. But it was not the absence of these purely conventional barriers which had brought about the delightful *camaraderie* that existed between the daughter of a proud Virginia family and the son of an humble Ohio farmer.

It had all had its beginning on her part in the discovery of what Mr. Carter laughingly termed Sam's only accomplishment. Sallie Custis—like most Virginia girls of that period—was exceedingly fond not only of horses, but of equestrian exercise as well. Brought up in a community where every one rode from earliest childhood, there was no accomplishment which attracted more attention from her than the possession of skill in the handling of horses. The very first day that she saw Burton mount and ride one of Mr. Carter's most fractious Kentucky thoroughbreds, she recognized in him one of the best, if not the most superb horsemen she had ever seen. Once in the saddle the awkward, ungainly figure was transformed as it were into one of grace and perfect poise. She rated him as one of the few "past masters" of the equestrian art that she had ever known. From that day he had found a friend in Sallie Custis. They soon formed the habit of riding

out together every pleasant afternoon as soon as Burton had finished his day's studies at the academy. Thus it was that the young Virginian girl had come in personal contact with this forlorn bit of human drift-wood, which had been buffeted about on the storms of frontier life, until it had now, for the first time, crossed her pathway. Her meeting with him had been but an incident in her life. In his it was an event, and that too, one of great moment. On her broader horizon the backward and uncouth country lad from an Ohio farm presented anything but a promising figure. Everything about him—face, figure, manners and homespun clothes—in short, all things purely external showed but too brazenly the difference between his lot and hers. It was perhaps not unnatural that he should recognize this fact more quickly than she. For as yet her interest in him was of that aggravatingly impersonal nature which one bestows upon things inanimate, which please but do not quicken the emotions. But to him it sufficed that kind fortune permitted him to associate daily on terms of friendly equality with one who seemed like a visitor from another world. Occasions like the present were red-letter days in his existence, to be lived over again and again, even to the minutest detail, long after the event itself had faded into a dim and distant past.

Returning now to the events of the afternoon, the pair had been standing for some time chatting in a somewhat desultory fashion, when the girl inquired in that imperious fashion which was almost second nature with her, "Sam, tell me something of your home and

family. It is not fair that I should be the only one to bestow confidences."

The sallow face of her companion flushed with a commingling of pleasure and embarrassment at words which showed a personal interest in him that so far had been largely confined to admiration of his horsemanship. Indeed, up to this time it had been absolutely impersonal.

"There isn't much to tell, Miss Sallie," he said. "I have lived all my life on the Ohio side of the river, not over fifty miles from where we are now sitting. We live comfortably, neither better nor worse than our neighbors. My father is a farmer who took up a quarter section of land in Ohio just before I was born. We—that is, father, mother and I—live in a three-room log cabin. Father and I do all the work about the place, for we keep no help at all. I cannot remember the time when I have not had to do a man's work. My father is just and fair, and no one could have a better mother than I. Father has always been able to keep two horses on the farm, and when I was very small he gave me a colt which I broke and rode. Until Uncle Tom Carter invited me to come to Maysville and attend the academy here, I had only about four months' schooling each year, from the time I was eight years old. It meant more of a sacrifice than you can imagine for my parents to spare me for a whole year from the work on the farm. But they felt that such an opportunity would never come again, and that I must avail myself of it. So I came to Maysville last September as you know, and I shall remain here until next June. That is about

all that there is to it. After this is over I suppose it means that I shall go back to the farm—*to stay.*"

These last words were uttered in a tone of sadness which did not escape the notice of the quick-witted girl at his side, but she made no comment on them at that time. Her only reply was this: "I am only a young girl, 'Sam,' and do not know much of what is going on outside my own home. But I am glad you told me what you have 'Sam,' and before I go I want to talk more with you about yourself."

There was little more conversation of a personal nature passed between these two widely divergent types respectively of Eastern culture and refinement and Western self-education and sturdy self-respect, before their homeward journey was commenced. But brief as had been the opportunity, yet it had seen the awakening in the sensitive soul of a warm-hearted Southern girl, of a real human interest in another life—far removed from that of her own chosen circle. True it was this interest focused on a life far more humble than her own, and yet it was deep, genuine and sincere. It was not founded on pity. Doubtless it was generated in part by sympathetic understanding of its narrowness and hopelessness, and yet it arose largely through the intuitive powers of a girl standing close to the threshold of womanhood. Through this mysterious gift—bestowed in so large degree upon the weaker sex—she saw in him even at the dawn of what was destined to be an acquaintance of years—a power and a strength as yet undreamed of by the youth himself. Whatever the motive—be it the passing fancy of a young girl's

sentimental nature or the outward expression of a deeply sympathetic heart—there was formed in her mind that fair November afternoon, a fixed purpose to be of service to this unpromising product of an Ohio farm. And the opportunity—be it said—was not far off.

CHAPTER II

SOWING THE SEED

It was the eve of Sallie Custis's departure from Maysville for her Virginia home. In her honor a party had been given by her friend, Julia Carter, to which had been bidden a goodly portion of the young people of the village. The Carter mansion was illumined from top to bottom in honor of the occasion. From within came sounds which indicated that dancing was to be the form of entertainment for the youthful guests there assembled. The father of the hostess of the occasion was in his element. Tom Carter's original and whole-hearted greetings to each guest, as well as his ability to make all feel perfectly at home, contributed in no small measure to the success of the occasion. Long before the guests had arrived, he had obtained unlimited amusement in privately coaching his nephew as to the social amenities that might be expected of him in such a select gathering.

"You must remember, Sam," he observed, with all due seriousness, "that in your dual character as nearest male relative and star-boarder in my establishment, you will be expected to do the honors of the occasion. Every one will be expecting you to be bubbling over with

joviality, wit and hospitality. You will, of course, have a stock of good stories on hand of the proper geometrical proportions for the boys, and well-timed compliments for all the girls. No matter what happens, remember to keep things moving. If all else fails, you might stir things up a little by yelling 'fire' a few times, or if you prefer, dance a Highland fling for the edification of our guests."

Burton bore all his uncle's bantering good-naturedly but in his heart he dreaded the evening more than one could have imagined. Both from lack of experience in such functions, and from innate shyness, he shrank from meeting so many strangers. At times he seriously contemplated a strategic flank movement to the neighboring woods, but fear of ridicule caused him to accept the inevitable. Without his recognizing it perhaps, he had a touch of fatalism in his make-up, and with respect to this event—as to many others of far more moment in after life—he believed that what was to be, must be. So it was, with much the same feeling that a felon regards the day of his execution, that Burton found himself one evening in November face to face with the guests at Sallie Custis's farewell party.

Whether it was the sudden plunge into what seemed like fairyland to him, or whether it was the consciousness that he was wearing for the first time a most wonderful tailor-made suit presented to him by his uncle, he felt far from at home amid such unnatural surroundings. His distress and embarrassment were so marked as to evoke sympathy from his uncle, who declared that it seemed a pity that social usages would

not permit of his nephew's entertaining the guests on horseback, for then he would be willing to vouch for his nephew's becoming a society star of the first magnitude."

Burton had not seen Sallie Custis alone since their late visit to Indian Rock. She had been too busy getting ready for her departure to indulge in any more horseback excursions, and these had been omitted of late. Nevertheless he had cherished the hope that the occasion of the party would not pass without an opportunity for at least a few moments private conversation with her. But as the evening progressed, it seemed as though he was doomed to disappointment. She had scarcely finished dressing before the guests arrived, and this of course gave her little opportunity for conversation with the members of the household.

Never so long as he lived would Burton forget the picture she presented that evening when she descended the stairway in her evening costume. She seemed to him so different in many ways from the girl who had been his companion of late on so many rides. There was a dignity, a sense of that complete self-possession and power about her—that springs only from experience and breeding—which Burton had never observed before. Youthful as she was, she gave unmistakable signs that night of the possession of those social qualities which were to make her, in after life, one of the favorite toasts among the cavaliers of the "Old Dominion." No fairer vision of girlish beauty had ever been seen in that community than was presented by the young Virginia girl on the eve of her departure

from Kentucky soil. She indeed formed a picture which was pleasant to look upon, and yet, because of it, she seemed to Burton further from him to-night than she had ever been before. Once more there swept over him the conviction that she belonged to a world separate and apart from that which claimed him. He had never before attended a function of this kind, and he felt ill at ease in consequence. This feeling, instead of decreasing as the evening passed, became more and more marked as there came to him a realization of how small a part was his in the festivities going on about him. Once or twice during the evening, Mr. Carter, in his hearty way, chided him for not taking part in the dancing, but hearing Burton's assertion that he had never mastered the art, he soon left him to his own resources.

This dance was but one of the many new phases of life which he had met in Maysville from the day of his first arrival there. Like so many of the other things he came in contact with here, it seemed as if he were not intended to participate in it. To his sensitive nature there came this unspoken question: "Would it not be better for you, if you were back on the plowed fields and green meadows of your Ohio home, instead of intruding here into a life so different from your own?" True, some of those present were schoolmates of his at the academy and yet they had never made him truly one of their own. Even to-night in his uncle's house they treated him with but scant respect. But he cared little for them or theirs. For in the midst of it all would come to him the thought that all this would probably be

over soon, and the time would come when he must go back to his own world, which was so different from the one which had opened in kaleidoscope fashion before his astonished gaze this night. And then what would it all matter?

During the course of the evening and as if to reach a place more in keeping with his mood, he had stepped from the brilliantly lighted parlor within, into the dark shadows of the balcony without. From thence after gazing back momentarily through the open windows upon the dancers within, he turned his back upon them all and looked up at the brightly shining stars above. From his earliest childhood they had always looked so benignant and kindly and to-night they seemed like old and tried friends. Somehow—explain it he could not—there had come over him a feeling of unutterable loneliness, wholly out of keeping with the scene which was taking place only a few feet from where he stood. Perhaps it was because he had commenced to see life in a newer and broader light than had ever been vouchsafed to him before. Possibly it had already commenced to dawn dimly on his understanding that he must soon face one of those crises which make or mar the destiny of man. In the darkness a voice from out of the illimitable depth of the firmament above, seemed to whisper to him the words—'hope, do not despair, the road to the mountain tops beyond is open to all. Success is not always to the swift, but rather to the sure.' Somehow the thought even if it were not an inspiration from above, brought comfort to a soul that was hungry and athirst. For it furnished it with

the meat of a definite purpose that was to be born within him that night and it gave to it the invigorating drink of ambition. Satisfied with this communion with his silent friends of the night, he turned and retraced his steps, until he stood looking once more from the open window upon the gay scene within. Without scarcely realizing it himself, his eyes seldom left for a moment the girlish figure of Sallie Custis as she moved back and forth in the mazes of the dance. There was a height of color in her cheeks and her girlish beauty never appeared to more advantage than it did just then. She was full of gaiety and happiness, and had entered fully into the joyous spirit of the occasion. Soon the music ceased, and then it was that she and her partner wandered out upon the balcony. As she did so she spied Burton and stopped to speak to him.

It was indeed a most attractive bit of femininity that was at that moment peering up into his face from a fleecy white shawl, which had been thrown carelessly over her hair of silken brown. Small of stature, a perfect figure, an easy carriage, dark eyebrows, aquiline nose, a cupid's bow mouth with lips of bright coral hue, all these combined to give the promise of extraordinary beauty of person.

"Sam," she said, "you have not asked me to dance to-night, and this too, in your uncle's house."

As she uttered these words she gave a pleasant pout as her eyes rested saucily upon him, and then added, "I have been saving a dance for you, Sam, all the evening."

"But I don't dance, Miss Sallie."

"Well, as there's hardly time for me to teach you to-night, suppose you sit out a dance with me, if you don't mind," was her frank reply to his disclaimer of saltatory accomplishments.

The grateful look in Burton's eyes must have more than repaid her for her kindness in doing for him what she had done for no other there present that evening. A few moments later found them walking up and down the long veranda of the house. The night was warm for the late fall even in Kentucky and a brilliant moon made this secluded spot a favorite resort for couples between the dances.

"Sam," she said, "you know I am going back home to-morrow. This is probably the last chance I shall have to talk with you for a long time to come. It may be that we shall never see each other again. But often since our ride to Indian Rock, I have been thinking about you and wondering if there was not some way that would enable you to get away from your lonely life on the farm and find an opportunity to do something that is more worthy of your abilities, something worth while."

Without waiting for his comment, which in all likelihood would not have come at all, she proceeded:

"You have heard me speak of our neighbors at home, have you not—the Brett family—and of their son Carl Brett, who is about your age?" Burton nodded a somewhat grim assent. He already knew enough about Carl Brett to realize that he was a sort of prodigy in the eyes of Sallie Custis. It may be that he recognized even now, events might so shape themselves

that in this same Carl Brett, he might some day find a dangerous rival on more than one field of combat.

"Well, I have an idea. Father wrote me the other day that Carl is to have an appointment to West Point next June, and I was wondering why you could not get such an appointment yourself as well as he."

The idea was so bold in its conception, that for the moment it startled her companion. The life of a soldier had never been one of his dreams and so far as he knew, he had no inclination nor special bent for a military career. While he came of good fighting stock of the Revolutionary brand, his own inclinations had at all times been most peaceful and domestic. But his mood just at the time was a most receptive one, and it needed only a suggestion from the girl at his side to turn his thoughts to any career that might promise relief from the deadly commonplace of the present. So he braced himself for the occasion, and promptly agreed that he would consider the matter, although he doubted whether he could secure the necessary influence to get the appointment even should he decide that he would try for it. But the practical side of the question presented no difficulties to the mind of Sallie Custis. All that she felt was the great prospect for future accomplishment that might be opened to him. Without knowing it, she was to be the instrument through which a hitherto aimless life should not only find itself, but thereby save a nation.

CHAPTER III

AN UNEXPECTED CANDIDATE FOR MILITARY HONORS

"Uncle Tom, would you be willing to help me get an appointment to West Point?"

In this wise was Mr. Thomas Carter accosted by his nephew one November afternoon shortly after the departure of Sallie Custis for her Virginia home. The seed that she had so skilfully sown in the mind of "Sam" Burton, now, for the first time, gave promise of bringing forth fruit. The question referred to was propounded to Mr. Carter with much visible embarrassment just as the latter was dismounting from his horse after a long ride through the country. "Tom" Carter was a man not easily thrown off his guard, but for once he was fairly nonplussed. He had invited his nephew to come and live with him while attending the academy, not because he saw in him any evidence of a special promise, but purely out of regard for his sister, who had asked him to do something for her boy. As he became better acquainted with the lad he had become strongly attached to him. However, at no time had he detected in him signs which betokened the possession of a tithe of that ambition, which had made his own life one of uninterrupted success from a circumscribed beginning to one of comparative ease and affluence.

"Tom" Carter was in the truest sense a self-made man and at heart took an honest pride in this fact. He had, too, it must be admitted, more than the average pride of race, and having no son of his own he had secretly cherished the hope that out of this unpromising material, as represented by his next male relative, there might be developed a man of parts. But up to the present moment, aside from the possession of most extraordinary equestrian skill, Sam Burton evidenced no indication of having any qualities out of the ordinary. Not but what he was faithful, appreciative and manly, but he lacked so many of the personal graces as to render the sterner qualities less noticeable. It therefore passed almost the bounds of credulity on Mr. Carter's part, to believe that he really understood his nephew's words aright. To reassure himself he queried:

"What is that you say, Sam?"

"Would you be willing to help me get an appointment to West Point, uncle?"

Before replying, Mr. Carter took occasion to make a prolonged survey of the heavens above and the earth beneath as if in search of strength from some unseen source with which to sustain the ordeal. In order to make sure that it was something more than a mere boyish whim, he undertook a little cross-examination as preliminary to a direct answer to his nephew's request.

"Sam, if the angel Gabriel had asked me to use my influence to get him a position where he could get steady work as a Kentucky bandmaster, I would not have been

more surprised than I am to receive such a request from you. But before I make you any promises I want to satisfy my curiosity on some points. Who has been suggesting to you that you possess an innate genius for war?"

"No one, uncle, though Sallie Custis did suggest to me that I try and get an appointment to the Academy."

"Can't that girl get rid of you in any easier way than that, Sam?"

As the person addressed made no response, in order to avoid an embarrassing silence, Mr. Carter proceeded with his cross-examination.

"What do you want an appointment for, anyway? You are not particularly bloodthirsty are you? Persons who have led a bucolic existence in early life seldom hunger after a military death. If you yearn for a sudden demise it won't be necessary for you to go as far as West Point to obtain it. All you have to do is to keep on riding fractious horses a little while longer and sooner or later you will find a speedier and less hazardous method for the attainment of that end. But seriously, my boy, have you any idea what it means to get an appointment to the Academy? In the first place you must have something of which boys of your age know nothing. That is influence. Then suppose that you have succeeded in securing the appointment, you still have to pass a severe mental and physical examination. Even were you successful in this, you must remember that the hardest part is still to come. It means four years of the most persevering and unyielding application. With the exception of a short

vacation at the end of your second year, you will probably not see any of your relatives or friends during that time. Once graduated from the Academy you will have but commenced the real life of a soldier. That means service on the frontier, campaigns against 'redskins' yearning to lift those precious locks of yours, and perhaps even war with some foreign power. It may even mean for you death on the battlefield. Have you given any time to the pleasant contemplation of all these things?"

"Yes, uncle, I have, and I am more than willing to take the risk. I feel that I can take care of all the rest if I can only be given an opportunity."

"Very well then, Sam," said Mr. Carter, "I will promise to help you on one condition. You must first get the approval of your parents. Besides this, I think it would be well for you to talk over the plan with Professor Dolbier, your principal at the academy, and see what he thinks of it. It would do no harm to see the professor at once and let me know what he says about it. I have always had the greatest faith in his judgment."

There was a gleam of pride in the eye of "Tom" Carter as a moment later he walked rapidly toward the village, leaving his nephew to pursue his way to the academy for the purpose of interviewing the distinguished head of that institution. As he walked along he said musingly to himself, "Well, after all, the boy seems to have the right stuff in him. He may win out if he only keeps his nerve. Somehow the first moment

I saw that bulldog jaw and those firm lips of his I half suspected something of this kind."

As for Burton, he at once followed his uncle's advice and proceeded to interview the head of Dolbier's Academy. Knocking timidly at the door of the professor's study, he was invited to enter. He did so and found himself face to face with the stern monarch of the student realm. From beneath beetling eyebrows glanced a pair of piercing black eyes. His face was wrinkled but the lines thereof were indicative of that strength of character which raised Albert Dolbier so far above his fellows.

"Well Sam, what can I do for you to-day?" he said without seeming to raise his eyes from his work.

"Professor, I called on you to ask your opinion as to whether it would be advisable for me to try to get an appointment to West Point."

"Do you really want to go there?"

"Yes."

"And why?"

"Because I want to do something worth while. Then, too, I think I should like the life of a soldier very well indeed."

"Have you ever regretted that you were not born of rich parents?"

"Why, I have never thought about the matter at all, professor. I have never been much of a hand to regret things. But you have not told me yet whether you think well of my plan to try for West Point."

"Yes, on the whole, I heartily approve of the plan,

and if you will listen to a few words of advice from an old man, I will be glad to give them to you."

Burton gratefully accepted the offer and Albert Dolbier proceeded in a half hour's talk to give to the friendless lad the garnered wisdom of a lifetime.

"In the first place, I want to say that to be the son of a poor man is not a handicap at all. It is the rich man's son that has to start out in life minus the spur of actual necessity. Necessity, while she is always a hard task-mistress, is usually a safe one. If you take this step at all, you must be determined to succeed in it. Let me tell you the secret of success in this world, as gathered from a store of fifty years' experience. First, you must have ambition of the right sort. Then you must plan far enough ahead so as to prepare yourself for the part you have chosen to play in this game that we call life. You must have sufficient moral courage to sacrifice present pleasure for the sake of future achievement. If you succeed in doing in the end what others have failed to accomplish and the world commences to applaud you, remain the same simple, unaffected person that you were when success seemed far away. The greater your fame the more approachable you should be. No snob can ever be a great man, but many a man has found greatness just beyond his grasp because he could not separate himself from his snobbishness. Sam, you will find, as you move out a little into the world, that one of the greatest helps is to find those that believe in you. Many a man's career has been made or marred by the presence or the lack of just this thing. Remember in the days to come,

that though you are but a boy, and with the world still before you, that I will not only have faith in you, but I believe as well, that you have a work to perform in this world, and that you have within you the capability to perform that work like a man and a Christian. The margin of difference between the men who succeed and the men who fail is very small. If you can learn to do some one thing yourself a very little better than your competitors you will have grasped the key to success; and yet always remember that the men that the world calls successful are not always truly such. Some whose careers have been branded as failures have achieved the truest success. As a soldier you should know that many a commander is strong enough to stand defeat but few know how to reap the benefits of victory. In battles as well as in life the man who never knows when he is defeated has within him the rudiments of victory. Be fair to others and the world will always be fair to you. Heaven has no favorites, but the world has many. Success achieved by means of 'a pull' is no success at all. Many a brute has undaunted physical courage, but to man alone is vouchsafed power to be morally brave and courageous. There are other kinds of honesty in this world besides the unwillingness to pick another man's pockets. Have these, but possess intellectual honesty as well. It is right to aspire to the highest position, but while doing so do not fail to realize that there are only a few grand prizes to be won by any generation, and these belong by right to the man who has the clearness of vision to see the opportunity, the capacity to plan how it shall be used, and courage to

utilize it at the right moment, and the perseverance and wisdom to make it yield its best fruit."

Never in his life had Sam Burton been spoken to as he had been by this, his instructor at the Maysville Academy. Every word went home. Nothing was lost, nor did he leave without expressing in his homely way his gratitude for the kindly interest and encouragement there given. In after years when the lad before him was a man and had filled the world with his renown, Albert Dolbier recalled vividly the appearance he presented on this November afternoon. He could recall without difficulty the picture he then presented—a lad of medium height, shoulders slightly stooped, somewhat stockily built, brownish auburn hair, blue eyes, freckled face, firm set lips and bulldog jaws—all indicative as he even then believed, of great possibilities and much reserve power.

CHAPTER IV

THE BURTON HOME

The home to which Burton returned at the close of his year at the Maysville Academy was located in one of those narrow valleys which characterize the country immediately adjacent to the Ohio River. The rude frame building which was dignified by this honored appellation was a far from imposing structure. With its unpainted walls of pine boards, its outward aspect was most disappointing. A story and a half in height barely provided space for the three rooms and a loft in which the family of three lived, ate and slept. At the rear of the house and connected therewith in a desultory sort of fashion, was a rough barn-like affair known in that region as a "lean-to." This served as a sort of combination kitchen and storehouse. The loft to which reference has been made, had long been the bedroom of the only child of the Burton household. To reach it one had to make use of a wooden ladder which ascended from the dining-room to the floor above. This loft had only one small window, and was furnished with a straw bed, a wash-stand and a wooden stool. On the walls were some cheap prints. Here and there in the room could be seen

some characteristic treasure of boyhood. In one corner was a muzzle-loading shotgun. Here was a rusty pair of spurs, while yonder could be seen a Mexican saddle, picked up in a trade with some itinerant pedler. But attention must now be paid to the circumstances which brought Burton home, some six weeks before the close of the school year at the Maysville Academy.

The story of the events that have transpired since the night of the farewell party given by Julia Carter for Sallie Custis six months before, is soon told. By dint of much hard study on his own part, aided by unstinted encouragement from Mr. Carter and patient tutoring at the hands of Professor Dolbier, Burton had succeeded in preparing himself very thoroughly for the entrance examinations to the "Academy." The appointment itself had been secured very largely through the personal efforts and influence of Mr. Carter and his friends.

The news of his success in securing the coveted honor came to Burton in the month of April, 1839. As soon as this was received he bade good-by to his Maysville friends and started home to make preparations for his long journey eastward. Before leaving his uncle's house he shyly requested his Cousin Julia to write to Sallie Custis and tell her of this piece of unexpected good fortune that had come to him. This she had promised to do at once. Then, after a farewell visit to Professor Dolbier and a long confidential chat with his uncle, he departed for his Ohio home. He had not been back there long, before it dawned on him that in many ways the life on the farm had assumed an aspect that

was both new and strange to him. As he knew yet but little of any life but his own, he did not fully realize its barrenness and somberness. His content with its monotonous routine, had all but vanished. Where before there had been only one world for him, there now were two. He felt that he had discovered during his year at Maysville a new world whose uttermost confines only he had touched. He longed to see more of it. In hazarding his future by attempting to enter West Point, he realized that he was in a sense cutting loose from the old and tried, and drifting out as it were upon an unknown sea. And with it all had come a dim consciousness of the possession of ambition and strength he had not heretofore dreamed he possessed. The windows of a great soul were just opening to let in the first light of high purpose and earnest endeavor. He was not a lad of many emotions. Life and existence meant very much the same thing to him. The mystery of it all had not as yet taken hold upon him. But in these later days had come much that filled him with wonder and surprise.

He found himself asking questions that had never before occurred to him. Why had he not known of this great world before? Why had no one told him that in it would be found opportunity for all? What did the future hold in store for him?

The invitation to Maysville and all that had occurred there, were, unknown to him, the voice of his destiny calling him to higher things.

He had been home several weeks and was about to start eastward, when to his surprise he received a little

note of congratulation, which bore the postmark of Vaucluse, Virginia. It read as follows:

My Dear Friend:

Julia has written me of your appointment to West Point. It is just fine. Your Uncle "Tom" told Julia to tell me that he held me personally responsible for your wanting to become a soldier, and that while you were going on the recommendation of a member of Congress, you were really going there as my cadet. So it seems that you have told them that it was I who first suggested that you go to West Point? Very well, I am going to accept the responsibility and you may go as "my cadet," if you are sure you will do me credit. I told my friend, Carl Brett, about you the other day and he has promised to look you up as soon as you arrive at the Academy. His father is one of the Board of Visitors this year and so they are going up there several weeks before the entrance examinations are held. I wish you success in your career as a soldier, and remember that I shall always expect to have reason to be proud of "my cadet."

Your friend,

Sallie Custis.

Burton read the note—brief though it was—through several times. There was nothing in it to be read between the lines. It was merely the frank expression of the good-will and friendly interest which the young southern girl evinced "in her companion" of the long rides over the Kentucky "pikes" of the autumn before.

But whatever the source of the interest or the nature of the feeling which inspired it, the note itself was treasured by the proud recipient, until the paper on which it was written was worn with much secret perusing. It was the first missive of the kind that he had ever received from a girl, and as such it was treasured with reverent care. Even at eighteen a young man does not care to acknowledge to the world that he is a creature of sentiment. As much with a view to being by himself as from a desire to have a last glimpse of the cherished scenes of his boyhood, Burton spent that afternoon (the last before his departure for the east) in visiting the favorite haunts of his earlier years. These were the swimming pool, the chestnut grove on the hillside just above the house, and the summit of Girdletree Hill, which overlooked the country for miles around. Each was visited in turn and each brought tender memories of his boyhood days. They were all associated closely with the friends of his childhood and youth. And a boy's friends like a man's, are the mile-posts that mark his progress along the journey of life. Some he leaves behind, or some leave him behind; some he overtakes, others overtake him. Only a few stay abreast. To-morrow he will say, "Their life back there in the old home was once mine, but mine is no longer theirs."

CHAPTER V

CADET LIFE

It was in the afternoon of the 29th of May, 1839. A steamer, from whose decks could be seen the most perfect river view in America, was slowly approaching what are known as "the Highlands" of the Hudson. Even the spirit of prophecy would scarcely justify the statement that it carried Cæsar and his fortunes. But if the presence of the great Roman general was wanting, it did bear another aspirant for military honors in the person of Samuel Burton—late of Maysville, Kentucky, and just at present a candidate for West Point under appointment from the then member of Congress for the most southerly of the Congressional Districts of Ohio.

Burton was just nearing the end of what was, to him, the most memorable journey of his life. The Ohio River steamer had conveyed him as far as Pittsburg, and from there he had traveled by stage and canal, until he had reached Philadelphia. Spending a few days there sight-seeing, he went on to New York for a short visit to that great center of American life. He had just completed his inspection of the great metropolis and was now embarked on the last stage of his long

journey from his Ohio home to the historic Highlands of the Hudson.

To the awkward, untraveled lad from the Valley of the Ohio, the journey to the sea-coast had been one of interest and moment. Never having been sixty miles from home before, everything that he saw was new, strange and wonderful. The busy scenes on the Ohio, the trip by canal through the Alleghanies from Pittsburg to Harrisburg and the ride by rail to Philadelphia and New York were all wonderful experiences to his youthful mind. But the journey had meant to him—youth though he was—far more than a mere opportunity to see new scenes and places. It had involved the severing of those early ties which, though humble, were nevertheless strong and enduring. The farm, the familiar swimming hole, the cattle on the hills, and the little district schoolhouse, each in turn had a strong hold on the heart-strings of one over whom sentiment held unsuspected reign.

But with all that behind him, his mind now turned toward the Academy life which he hoped was soon to open its doors to him. He felt a strange thrill of mingled dread and exultation as he waited expectantly for his first view of the historic grounds of West Point. He felt more than ever before in his life his own shortcomings, as well as his temerity in seeking an appointment to this famous institution. He felt almost tempted now to turn back and return to the beaten and less hazardous path of his old life on the farm. But this his pride, as well as his instinctive dislike for turning back after he had once entered upon an undertaking—

amounting in his case almost to superstition—would not permit such thoughts to linger long in his mind.

No one without a feeling of emotion, can behold for the first time the picturesque environment of the famous military school. Standing upon the deck of the Hudson River steamer on that pleasant May day in 1839, the first view of the West Point buildings, on their lofty granite base, was one never to be forgotten.

The steamer was now entering the narrows with its green-timbered heights of cedar. In the distance could be seen Storm King, Crow's Nest and Bull Hill, each clothed in deep shades of evergreen. These, with Fort Putnam, the buildings on the Academy grounds as seen from the river, and the "Point" itself, where the river makes its turn, all fill the background of every West Point memory.

The passengers were all crowded forward as the steamer rounded a turn in the river, and suddenly one exclaimed, "there is West Point!" Burton's heart beat fast and the blood surged in his veins. From the summit of a parapet above floated the national ensign, over that cherished scene of historic associations.

Soon the boat docked, and Burton found himself ascending the steep roadway that leads to the Academy grounds above. This road, with its granite retaining walls, leads sheer up a precipitous bluff until it finally reaches the level plain above. Approaching the summit, it swings sharply to the left around gray lichen-covered rocks, shaded in part by great forest trees, then turns to the right, flanked by heavy granite rocks, and emerges upon the plain, one hundred and sixty feet

above the river. Riding under the double row of elms, he traversed the length of the drill-ground and found Rowe's Hotel. He was now all but face to face with the "Institution" which for four years was to shape his destiny and mold him for his country's service. Everywhere was the presence of unspoken authority. It came from turreted buildings, four-storied granite barracks, and uniformed officers hurrying to and fro, as well as from the velvety sward of the parade-grounds and from the sight of the cannon and trophies of war.

It would not be true to say that he had no misgivings over the outcome of this new and momentous venture which now confronted him. What youth of eighteen would not have had doubts under such circumstances? But for the moment, at least, his thoughts were on the more immediate duties which now confronted him. He had determined not to report his presence to the authorities immediately on his arrival, but to postpone the announcement of that important fact for a few days until he had opportunity to look around him a little.

Inquiry brought him the information that two weeks must elapse before he could take his entrance examination, and this would give him abundant time and opportunity to visit the country around West Point, as well as permit him to make acquaintance with many of his future classmates, some of whom had already registered at the hotel where he was now temporarily stopping.

The very first of these to present himself was a tall, handsome, black-haired youth, who stepped up to him as he came out from dinner at the hotel on the evening of his arrival, and inquired if his name was "Burton."

Receiving proper assurance on this point, he in turn introduced himself as Carl Brett of Virginia. It must be admitted that the person thus addressed heard the name of his interlocutor with no little trepidation. He had heard so much of Brett from Sallie Custis that he had long since come to picture him as a prodigy of learning and accomplishments. Having seen him in the flesh, he lost no time in proceeding to verify this preconceived conception of the cadet from Virginia. Even a less fair-minded rival than Burton would have willingly admitted that Brett was as fine a specimen of physical manhood as one could find anywhere. He had a natural military carriage which bespoke the born soldier. His manner was winning and pleasant. No matter where you placed him he was sure to be at ease. The only features to mar an exceptionally attractive face were a weak mouth and an eye that seemed to lack deep feeling.

Brett frankly admitted to Burton that he had been ordered by a young lady friend of his to look him up as soon as he should report at the Academy. This reference to Sallie Custis brought an unwonted heightening of color to Burton's sunburned face, which was by no means lost on Brett. After chatting a few moments on general topics, they parted, with the agreement that they should meet on the morrow for a stroll around the grounds.

The next day, under the skilful pilotage of the more sophisticated Virginian, Burton made the rounds that so many cadets have made before him. Every little while they would stop for an introduction to some

fellow-plebe, or to be presented to some of the Academy officials. Occasionally a faintly concealed smile greeted the twain as they went hither and thither on their tour of inspection. This was particularly noticeable whenever they passed some of the gay throngs of girls who had arrived for the commencement week festivities. It must be admitted that the smiles were invariably directed toward Burton, whose characteristic rustic appearance betokened the presence of a newly arrived "plebe." After a very enjoyable two hours spent in this manner with Brett, Burton excused himself and returned to his room at the hotel. For the present there was nothing to do except to get acquainted with his roommates and await the arrival of the rest of the incoming cadets.

Shortly after this he went to the adjutant's office to register his name, a step which signified his willingness to enter upon some future possible honors and many certain woes. He found there the Adjutant Lieutenant Wagaman, and in a moment had crossed the Rubicon which separates the military from the civil life. This officer took Burton's name, the occupation of his father and the latter's name. Next he was turned over to a soldierly orderly and was soon filing along behind him toward the barracks. As he approached the barracks he perceptibly increased his speed, in an effort to escape a shower of missiles which proceeded from the "cockloft," trajected in his direction as a questionable form of greeting from the "yearlings" or class above. The orderly led him away across the area, up the iron steps to the stoop and then into one of the rooms.

Within was a cadet officer, detailed to take charge of the new cadets. In stentorian tones came the order—"Take your hat off." Burton at once complied. "Stand at attention," was next hurled at him in a voice seemingly full of suppressed rage. The speaker seemed disposed from the glare of his eye, to pounce upon the new arrival and rend him limb from limb. Next the cadet who had already offered him so many undesirable attentions turned and, with mock servility, said, "May I have the pleasure, sir?" and immediately passed out of the room. As he did so, Burton followed. He was led up four stairways to the cockloft, and ushered into one of the rooms of that "realm of earth-encumbering souls." Then, pointing to a copy of the posted regulations, printed on blue paper in black type, he announced that when Burton's trunk was delivered he would see to it that these regulations were obeyed to the letter.

The moment the door had closed on his stern mentor, Burton gazed hopelessly into the faces of the other occupants of the room, all apparently equally hopeless as himself. But as the footsteps of the cadet officer died away in the distance, their faces broadened into a smile of amusement. The new arrival was not the only one present who had been through this rough school of experience.

The room in the old North Barracks, in which Burton now found himself, he soon learned was referred to by the high-sounding title of "Room 1, Rue de Cockloft." As he entered its sacred precincts for the first time this day, escorted by his stern mentor, he found it already tenanted by three youths who were destined to be his

companions in that abode of misery known as "plebedom." He was not long in making their acquaintance. One, who through Academy days, as well as in after life, was referred to as "Dad" Rankin, was a round-faced Yankee lad from Maine. The second was from Kentucky—Theodore Chadbourne by name. The third, the youngest man of the class, came from the nearby village of Montrose-on-the-Hudson, and was early christened "Babe" Candee. Drawn together by their common misery and homesickness, the four lads speedily became fast friends. This acquaintance so auspiciously begun, was destined to continue throughout future years.

After chatting a few moments with his new friends, and exchanging experiences of recent date, Burton proceeded to unpack his few personal effects and dispose of them under the direction of his more experienced roommates.

As soon as the class of '43 had all reported, they were summoned to the dreaded mental and physical examinations. Burton's heart quickened within him as he saw that august body known as the Academy Board. In the center sat the Superintendent, Major Richard Delafield, a man with heavy sandy eyebrows, abundant grayish hair and a prominent nose. He wore glasses and had the air of an officer and a man of cultivation. On his right sat Charles F. Smith, the Commandant, a man of magnificent carriage and a soldier every inch of him. He it was who made the most impression on Burton. Then there were the professors, Mahan, Church, Bartlett and the rest. The examinations did not prove half as trying as Burton had anticipated,

and he came through them with excellent credit. Then it was that he found himself duly permitted to commence his career as a West Point cadet. Yes, at last the first goal in youth's attempt to find its real self had been attained. But this was one of many unknown quantities that must be discovered by his own unaided efforts before the mysterious equation of what the great future had in store for him, would be finally solved. Truly, Heaven has not vouchsafed to man any more sublime spectacle than the struggle of a truly great soul to find itself. The development of such a one is not subject to the same laws that govern the lives of ordinary mortals. God and man may seem at times to conspire to delay unduly the day of its appearing. But sooner or later—perhaps under the storm and stress of some Titanic struggle or out of the utter desolation of apparent failure—the real "man of destiny" will appear, to control with his single hand the destiny of nations as the chosen instrument of the Providence of God.

CHAPTER VI

A NIGHT AT "BENNY HAVENS'"

THE story of Burton's first two years at the Point in its main features are soon told. More than sixty youths, ranging in age from sixteen to eighteen, had been gathered from various parts of the country to make up the "plebe" class at West Point, to be afterward known in history as the "class of 1843." Of this number scarcely one had known any other member of the class before their arrival at the Academy. Events of momentous consequence, not only to themselves but to the nation at large, were to hinge upon the friendships and the knowledge gained from the experiences of their Academy days.

None of the newly arrived "plebes" had much opportunity or time for indulging in homesickness, even had they been so inclined. For, almost from the day of their arrival, they were introduced to the never-ending grind of cadet drill. Twice a day they were drawn up in line by some of the yearlings and in awkward squad and civilian dress, were commanded in harsh tones—"eyes right, left face, forward, march!"—and other equally nonsensical things. They were drummed up in the morning, drummed to their meals in the daytime,

and peaceably drummed to their bed at night. Finally, after continual drilling, backed up by their safe passage through the dreaded ordeal of examination, they were permitted to cast aside their civilian clothes in order to don the cadet uniform of gray cloth, with bell-shaped buttons, black cord and white trimmings. Later came preparations for the summer encampment on the southwest side of the Academy grounds, in which all the cadets save the second class, who were off on a furlough, took part. This completed, the barracks were rapidly cleaned out, and the entire cadet corps marched to the encampment ground, there to take up, for the summer, their out-door life in the tent.

At the end of August the encampment was broken up and the cadet corps returned once more to the barracks to resume again the work in the class-room. Then commenced the real and more serious student life. Burton now for the first time came in personal contact with these august personages, the Superintendent of the Academy, Major Delafield; Commandant of cadets, Charles F. Smith; the young adjutants, Joseph Hooker and Irwin McDowell; the famous veteran professors, Mahan, Church, Swift, Bartlett; and later the famous riding master, Henry Hershberger. He soon, too, became acquainted with a number of the upper classmen, many of whom already bore such reputations in the Academy world as to be prophetic of their success in wider fields later on.

Toward the middle of the first year of his life at the Academy Burton was invited by some of his classmates to make a stolen visit to the sacred precincts of "Benny

Havens," and he finally determined to accept the invitation so extended. "Benny's" was a favorite resort on the outer edge of the Academy grounds, beneath the rugged cliffs, nearly a mile below the Point. To reach "Benny Havens' " sequestered hostelry under the hill, it was necessary to skulk by and under Fort Putnam beneath the rocks and through stony fields, at the same time carefully avoiding the traveled highway and the lookouts of Cozzen's Hotel. This gained, the visitor could then make a rapid march across the road, followed by a plunge down the bank to the cherished trysting place for "lost souls."

Here not only were the more daring of the cadets wont to clandestinely gather for an evening, but not infrequently there came from the outside world a staid, gray-haired veteran for the purpose of making a devout pilgrimage to "Benny's" shrine. This sanctuary of "Havens' " had a big fire-place, in which, during cold weather, a roaring fire was always blazing. In this place the cup that inebriates could always be had, over which presided the historic "Benny" himself, smooth of face, good-natured, sleek and fat.

But to return now to the story of Burton's first visit to "Benny Havens'." It was a cold November night in the fall of 1839. The Academy buildings at West Point were, save as to the officers' quarters, wrapped in total darkness. Lights had been out in the old north barracks for more than half an hour, when there came a soft knock at the door of what had been styled by its three "plebe" inmates "Room No. 1, Rue de Cockloft."

A whispered "Who's there?" was answered by the

ungrammatical but very assuring words, "It's me—Brett."

The door was then opened softly to disclose Cadet Burton and his three roommates, "Dad" Rankin, Chadbourne and "Babe" Candee. They were partly dressed and were evidently not unprepared for this nocturnal call.

"We are all ready, fellows," said the young Virginian, in a low voice. "Nykins, Bob Tapley and I will wait for you down below on the north side of the building."

Brett's head was then withdrawn, and perfect silence reigned once more on the top floor of the old North Barracks. A moment later four dark figures might have been seen descending the creaking stairs in their stocking feet to the area floor below. There they stopped a moment to put on their shoes, which they were carrying in their hands, and soon joined their fellow conspirators who were waiting for them outside.

After leaving the "Barracks," the scouting party executed a series of strategic moves, all planned with the evident purpose of evading the kindly attentions of the "powers that be." The cadets were so successful in their military maneuvers that hardly ten minutes elapsed before the enemy's outposts had all been safely passed, and they found themselves safe and sound beneath the rugged cliffs nearly a mile below the "Point." To reach their destination, whatever it might be, the daring plebes had to pass by and beyond Fort Putnam beneath the rocks and at times over stony embankments. They carefully evaded in their circuitous

route the traveled highway that leads from the Academy fields to Cozzen's Hotel. After traveling in Indian file for nearly a quarter of an hour, Brett in the lead, they came to a sequestered building from the closed shutters of which there came a gleam of friendly light from within.

"Come in, fellows," said Brett, and with the assurance of a man many years his senior, he led his daring band through the hospitable door of "Benny Havens'" hostelry—the favorite stamping ground of the convivially inclined. With all the aplomb of an *habitué* of the place, Brett introduced all of his friends to the famous "Benny" himself. The latter, out of respect to his avoirdupois, did not arise from his seat before the open fire-place as he greeted his youthful visitors with complacent cordiality. He invited them to a seat before the hearth, where a roaring fire was blazing, and expressed his pleasure at welcoming the new arrivals to the shrine where was to be found the cup that not only cheers, but also not infrequently inebriates. The seven youths seated themselves with ill affected ease at one of the tables and ordered food and drink for themselves. At first they were visibly embarrassed, but the cheerful fire and the arrival of refreshments drove away all fear from their minds, and they were soon having a most hilarious time. Brett, who was a born leader, acted as master of ceremonies, and so convivial a company could not have asked for a better one.

After the viands had all been disposed of, and the drinks ordered, he arose in his chair and, holding aloft a stein of mammoth proportions, proposed, with great

gravity, a toast "To the Army and its representatives here assembled." This was drunk with proper ceremony, and was followed by repeated demands for a speech from the toastmaster. Nothing loth, Brett stepped upon a chair, and after eulogizing in glorious terms, their rotund host and the occasion, called upon all the convivial souls present to join him in singing, in honor of their famous host, that immortal "anthem" known as "Benny Havens! Oh!"

The cadets there assembled, nothing loth, soon were raising the rafters with the well-known words, the first verse of which is to the following effect:

"Come fill your glasses, fellows, and stand up in a row,
To singing sentimentally, we're going for to go.
In the army there's sobriety, promotion's very slow,
So we'll sing our reminiscences of Benny Havens! Oh!
Oh, Benny Havens! Oh! Benny Havens! Oh!
So we'll sing our reminiscences of Benny Havens, Oh!

Then followed the other stanzas, one after the other, the cadets all standing, and touching glasses every time the chorus was sung. After the tones of the last note had died away, there were renewed calls for more eloquence from the now plainly mellowed toastmaster. Carried away by the uproarious character of the invitation, Brett proceeded to address his now equally loquacious classmates in a speech, the traditions of which lived at the Academy long years after the gifted author of it had left its classic halls.

"Comrades, this is a momentous occasion. Never

before have 'plebes' gathered together in such numbers beneath Benny Havens' hospitable roof. In the past there have been few greater events than this in all history. We celebrate to-night around this festive board our advent on the field of military glory and renown. I cannot restrain myself from assuring you all that even the triumph of our present great achievement will fade into insignificance before the high honors that the future undoubtedly holds in store for us."

At this point the speaker had to pause, while the cheers which "Dad" Rankin called for, in a voice which was suspiciously husky, had subsided. The leader then continued:

"Never before in this land of the brave and the home of the free, has there been assembled a more brilliant galaxy of military talent than I see before me to-night. With us to lean on in all great emergencies, the nation will be safe from harm. The army must always have leaders, and we are, of course, the most available material for that purpose. Your presence here to-night bespeaks for you all the possession of the stuff that heroes are made of. [Loud applause, accompanied by weeping on the part of Rankin.] Remember, fellows, that the country is educating us for war as well as for peace. If war does come, Uncle Sam must have strategists and tacticians in order to drive the invaders from our soil.

"How can the learned gentlemen who occupy so much of our valuable time in the classroom expect us to become great strategists and tacticians, unless we have the benefit of such object lessons as the one which has

been our good fortune to experience to-night? In our triumphal march from the old North Barracks to Benny's door, 'Old Sniffley' [here the speaker's voice was drowned by groans called forth by the mention of the name of the unpopular personage whose lot it was to spy upon the cadets in their quarters] has been completely outgeneraled, and we have demonstrated to the world [here the speaker bowed low in Benny's direction] that we are past masters in both tactics and strategy. And now, fellows, after drinking the toast to our dear friends, the Faculty—who are unaccountably absent on this great occasion—let us all brace ourselves, while that great impressario, 'Dad' Rankin, sings that glorious anthem of the Order of Inebriates known as 'Willie Brews a Peck o' Malt'."

Brett sat down amid cheers so uproarious that it might easily have been heard by the Commandant had the wind been blowing in his direction. So unusual was this, that it caused Benny himself to appear on the scene with a mild expostulation that his "friends de poys must make less noise."

"Dad" Rankin essayed Brett's feat of standing in a chair while graciously complying with his associates' demand for the song, but found himself unequal for the task. He did, however, succeed, with great effort, in standing on the floor, where, flanked by four chairs strategically placed, he rendered the famous song. After the emotion caused by his efforts had been partially removed by another round of drinks, each of the remaining cadets was called upon to add his share to the gayety of the occasion. Burton was beguiled into

attempting a declamation of the "Burial of Sir John Moore," to the accompaniment of uproarious applause on "Dad" Rankin's part. But this ended in failure. Then it was that the fact that it required only a little liquor to throw Burton into a state of semi-intoxication was indelibly impressed on the mind of Carl Brett. Long years afterward, amid other scenes, this was all to come back to him with great vividness.

It was nearly the hour of one in the morning, before the program was completed to the satisfaction of the Academy visitors. At that hour Brett called the roll, marshaled his cohorts together, and started off at a slow pace for the Barracks, to the tune of "We Won't Go Home Until Morning." After some preliminary scouting by the more sober of the party, the cadets regained their quarters in safety, and the memorable "plebe" expedition to Benny Havens' went down in the Academy annals as a classic, fit to be inserted in Jommini's famous "Treatise on the Strategy of War."

CHAPTER VII

THE FURLOUGH

The one great oasis in the life of the West Point cadet is the furlough which comes midway between entrance and graduation at the Academy. Cadet Burton had passed successfully from the "plebe" stage to that of the "yearling," and now his days in that capacity were rapidly approaching their close. The past two years had been exceedingly pleasant as well as profitable ones to him. He had taken an excellent stand in his studies and had been fairly proficient in drill. As for horsemanship, there were none in the class that thought of contesting the honors with him along this line, with the one exception of Cadet Brett. By no one in the Academy had the two months' summer furlough been looked forward to with more pleasure than it had by Burton. There was a special reason why this was so.

Early in the spring of 1841, Mr. Thomas Carter had journeyed southward with his daughter Julia as far as Richmond, Virginia. There the latter had met Sallie Custis, who was visiting with friends at the Virginia Capital, and had been persuaded to go for a visit of indefinite duration to the house of her friend at Vaucluse. When the time had come for Mr. Carter to

return to his Kentucky home he had been confronted with the request that he permit his daughter to remain at Vaucluse until July, at which time her cousin, "Sam" Burton, would be on his furlough and could arrange to come to Vaucluse and act as escort for his cousin on her homeward journey. Cadet Burton had a short time before this been the recipient of his second letter from Sallie Custis, in which he had been most cordially invited to be a guest at Vaucluse on his homeward journey. This invitation had been duly accepted in a letter, which, as "Dad" Rankin declared, "was much longer than the occasion required."

Burton and Brett had arranged that they would travel together on the trip south. There was no question as to the gratification felt by the former at the receipt of the invitation from Sallie Custis inviting him to visit Vaucluse. In his secret thoughts he had hoped that some day he might visit her at her home, but even his dreams had not carried him to the extent of hoping for so speedy a realization of his aspirations in this quarter.

Never would Burton forget his first view of Vaucluse, which he obtained as the steamer on which he and his fellow cadet had embarked the night before at Washington, neared the steamboat landing at that point. Brett pointed out to him the Custis home, which was situated far back from the river, and was built of brick. But just at that moment Burton's interest in the scenery had suddenly died out. The reason for this might have been found in the fact that he had spied on the dock now only a few hundred feet away the slender

figures of two girls. The one, he felt sure, was his cousin, Julia Carter, the other, Sallie Custis. He experienced at that moment a peculiar sensation, not unlike that which came to him in later years when about to go into action. He would not have run away for the world, and yet he suffered in anticipation of the ordeal of meeting the one, who in her own sweet, modest way, had been his guiding star toward higher thoughts and loftier aspirations. As the steamer approached the dock, the two girls waved their handkerchiefs and the young men waved their hats in return. A moment more and the two cadets were standing on the dock, receiving a warm welcome from the two girls, who had come down to meet them in such an unconventional manner. Sallie Custis would have had considerable difficulty, had she not been expecting to see him, in recognizing her former Maysville acquaintance in the young cadet attired in the natty tight-fitting gray uniform, which set off to great advantage his erect figure. The awkward, ill-dressed, diffident country lad had vanished and in his place there appeared an easy, self-contained young man whose handsome figure was set off by a uniform which fitted him perfectly.

The greetings of one and all were most cordial. That of Sallie Custis—considering their previous slight acquaintance—was particularly so. Transferring their hand luggage to the care of some of the attendant negroes, the party walked up the long shady walk toward the Custis home.

As they passed through the field, accompanied by a retinue of ebony-hued servants, the outline of the house

could be clearly seen, standing beneath great sentinel trees. It was a three-story affair, built in Colonial style, with numerous smaller structures adjoining it. The house was supported by two immense pillars in front, all of which furnished firm support for an inviting portico which covered three sides of the house. The wide green lawn in front sloped to the waters of the Chesapeake, and was dotted with patriarchal oaks, clustering hollys, wide-spreading maples and feathery acacias. The presence of numerous small buildings in the immediate vicinty of the house gave to the place more the appearance of a little village than that of a private residence. Even before they passed within the portals of the house, there seemed to be wafted toward them an enticing atmosphere suggestive of the cheer and warmth within. At the extreme right of the house was the library, with its shelves full of great books, while outside was to be seen shaded nooks and vine-clad porticoes which looked in upon French windows and dainty muslin curtains.

Entering the front door from the Corinthian pillared porch, one found a wide hall, running the entire depth of the house, and opening in turn upon a porch in the rear. A covered colonnade led from either side of this rear porch to the laundry and the kitchen. Here, as elsewhere, the architect of that day sacrificed use to beauty. The fact that the food became stone cold on the way to the dining-room was utterly ignored. A stately staircase, with a slender mahogany banister rail, the newel post of which was curiously wrought, rose from the extreme end of the hall.

The interior of the house was capacious. The large roomy hall was hung with attractive landscapes throughout its length. These last were beautiful sylvan pictures, with great forest oaks, green carpeted meadows and the fair, clear sky in the background.

A long, low parlor opened from the hall, near the front doorway. This was the room of state, with its tall brass candlesticks, white carved mantels, heavy mahogany furniture, long ebony-framed glass, and large oaken chairs of original pattern.

In the sitting-room the fire crackled upon the hearth, casting sparks from sticks of pine and hickory, while the brazen andirons reflected the red carpeting upon their well-polished surfaces.

Treasures of marble, bronze, porcelain and silver were scattered here and there.

The cushions of the comfortable chairs which faced the fire-place were of brown Spanish leather, admirably preserved. Iron candelabra, six foot in height, and a large ship lantern lighted up the rows of the family portraits, which here and there lined the walls.

From the entrance hall led a broad staircase, easy of ascent, to the rooms above, while from beyond opened the dining-room, with its paper of cerulean blue and carpet to match.

Of the Virginia planter of antebellum days, his enormous wealth, his culture, refinement of taste, his marvelous luxury of life, the whole truth has never been told.

He was a veritable potentate, ruling his black minions as absolutely as any despot of old. He was firm in the

belief that he and his people were the chosen of the Almighty to rule and govern their fellows. Slavery was the root and branch of the whole system. Well did those planters know, that to root it out was to destroy the tree itself. There have never been any men like those self-made southern planters in this country, unless the old patroons of the Dutch settlements are excepted, and even they seem rude and rough by the comparison. The old-time southern planter was not a farmer. He was a great lord and the owner of serfs, with virtual powers of life and death.

Judge Custis owned a house in Richmond, where he spent his winters, but for the greater part of his time he lived in his château on the Chesapeake, there entertaining and really enjoying life. This was his real home, and on this place he spent vast sums of money.

Even at a first glance the mind of "Sam" Burton was deeply impressed with these wondrous family portraits which lined the walls, for he had never before seen anything of this kind in his limited experience. There were pictures of stately dames in maidenly and matronly beauty. Powdered hair and high-heeled spangled shoes and traditional brocades were all pictured there. In more than one of the faces he could detect features which were possessed by the daughter of the household wherein he was an invited guest.

The library, however, as the visitor soon learned, was the favorite abode of the family. When not there, they could usually be found on the cool back porches with their covering of twining woodbine and white jessamine. From the roadway in front the path was laid through

an ornamental gateway to "Little Neck Point," with its orchard, grass and superb oaks. Upon this place was placed a rustic seat in a clump of holly and oak, offering a fine viewpoint from which to gaze upon the far-reaching and changing waters of the Chesapeake. Early sunrises were to be seen here, too, by him who was venturesome enough to arise and see them. Gold, purple and crimson they were with a mingling of wavy sky.

Then there was a walk through a garden to a creek which opened upon the bay, where were the prettiest of sailboats imaginable. This, with the abounding stables, was to furnish Burton with unfailing resources in the way of amusement during his visit to Vaucluse. The whole scene was the first touch of real romance that had ever come into his life. His surroundings scarcely seemed real; they partook more of fairyland than of aught else. As if by magic he had been transported to some land of enchantment. Everything about contrived to give him this impression. His own room, with an enormous canopied bed and rich furnishings, the high ceilings and richly furnished rooms of the old colonial house, the Judge with his courtly manner, imperial will and pride of race, the stately mistress of the establishment, whose every lineament and act betokened her gentle breeding and inborn gentility, the great estate with its multitude of slaves and abundance, and last, but not least, the fair young mistress, Sallie Custis herself, gave the finishing touches to what was the realization of his dearest dream, to see Vaucluse, the ancestral home of the Custis family. He saw much of Judge Custis during the days that followed, and studied him well. At

times he wondered at the manner of man he was and at his easy mode of life. Young and inexperienced though he was, he had the good sense to realize that none could truly judge such a life as was led by him and those of his own station, save those who have themselves lived it. During the days of his visit at Vaucluse he came to know his young hostess in a way that had never been opened to him before. Heretofore she had seemed to belong to a world separate and apart from his. Her attitude up to this time had been more that of one who in kindness of heart and friendly sympathy was reaching down to help him rise to his level. But now all this had changed. For the first time in his life he was now meeting her day by day on terms of absolute equality.

During all this time he was persistently favored with the company of his former classmate Brett, who did not allow the presence of the young visitor from the West to deter him from haunting the vicinity of Vaucluse. When the two young men were together, the keenest observer would have failed to detect any difference in their treatment on the part of the imperious young mistress of the house. And yet even the casual visitor at the house, during such times, would have had no difficulty in surmising that there existed even thus early in the game, a thinly concealed rivalry between the two budding warriors. It might be added, too, that it needed only a slight display of coquetry on the part of a certain most attractive bit of femininity, to fan this hitherto good-natured rivalry, into flames of jealousy.

CHAPTER VIII

THE TRIP TO SQUIRREL ISLAND

The days that followed Burton's arrival at Vaucluse passed all too quickly to suit this neophyte in luxurious living. With rides in company with his hostess and Julia Carter—in which they were nearly always joined by Carl Brett—interspersed with an occasional hunting party and attendance upon numerous neighborhood functions, the hour of departure was now uncomfortably close at hand. But with all the many affairs that had been prepared for the diversion of the guests of the household, Burton had every day found time for an hour's chat with Judge Custis, for whom he had formed a strong liking. With Mrs. Custis he had found it difficult to get acquainted. Whether it was her natural reserve, or an unwillingness to accept him on the same plane of friendly equality that had characterized the intercourse of her husband and daughter with the visitor from the West, it nevertheless was true that Burton never felt at home in her presence. But the marked cordiality and friendliness of Sallie Custis more than compensated for any shortcomings on the part of her mother.

"Is Cadet Burton ready to volunteer for extra

hazardous duty to-day?" The words, uttered in the soft, half-caressing tones of a typical daughter of the Old Dominion, found a prompt response in the person of the budding warrior to whom they were addressed.

The midday meal had been over for an hour or more, and after a smoke with Judge Custis, the latter had left his visitor to himself while he returned to his study to prepare some legal opinions which had awaited his attention for some time past. Burton, left to his own resources, had quickly betaken himself to his favorite haunt, a seat on the promontory, situated some distance from the house and which overlooked the waters of the "Bay." Here he was wont to indulge in cigars and day dreams, in which, it must be confessed, Sallie Custis, clothed in semi-celestial garments, nearly always appeared as the central figure.

At such times imagination and curling smoke ran riot and the future held for him possibilities which in his saner moments he would never dare to evoke. While engaged, in the manner of youths, in painting a mental picture of himself clothed in a gorgeous uniform, rescuing in his arms a beautiful form from a peculiarly dangerous band of brigands, whose leader somehow closely resembled his classmate, Carl Brett, he was suddenly brought to life by hearing the question of his fair hostess, who had succeeded—girl though she was—in stealing a march upon him, in broad daylight. Under such circumstances there was nothing to do but surrender, and so the garrison surrendered unconditionally.

"Miss Sallie, any duty, no matter how prosaic its nature, would be extra-hazardous with you as the one in

charge. But in the present campaign I am enlisted for the war. Lead on, and I will follow."

"Now, Mr. Burton, that is a very pretty speech, but it don't sound a bit like you. Is this all that West Point has done for you, changed you from a man of deeds to one of words? I have half a mind not to ask you at all."

Here, seeing the look of serious alarm on her companion's face, she relented, and said: "But I will give you your chance and if you fail me, you will never be asked to go with me again. I want you to get a boat and row me over to that Island which you see yonder. There is an old colored woman sick over there—my old darky mammy—and I want to take some medicine and delicacies over to her. Of course, knowing that you don't belong to the navy, I have some well-grounded fears that you may upset us both. On the whole, I prefer to get back alive. So you see now why I call the duty extra-hazardous."

A look of relief came over Burton's face as he assured her, that although he belonged to the army and not the navy, in his own estimation at least, he considered himself fully qualified to command a squadron, to say nothing of managing a rowboat. So a few minutes later found the two of them on their way across the three-mile stretch that separated the Custis plantation from Squirrel Island. For a few moments little was said by either one of the occupants of the boat. The oarsman was fully occupied in getting a stroke and landmark that suited him, while the fair passenger seemed intent on the landscape. But the silence, so far

as the girl was concerned, was of that deceptive sort which invariably precedes an attack from an unexpected quarter. Suddenly there came this whimsical query:

"Mr. Burton, are you planning to kill many people after you get through learning how to do it properly at the Academy?"

An amused expression passed over the grim face of the warrior of twenty, as he replied, with a reflective tone in his voice: "Yes, I already have a considerable number of persons marked for slaughter sooner or later."

"And who are they, may I ask?" A pair of teasing brown eyes were now gazing expectantly at him.

"Well, there is a Professor at the Academy, who has so little appreciation of my extraordinary mental gifts as to give me a zero in recitation nearly every time I recite, and then marks me 'absent' besides. I have put him down for slaughter, for one."

"And who else?"

"Well, if Carl Brett don't stop coming over with such extraordinary regularity to your house during my visit here, and cease attempting to monopolize your time, I think I shall also add his name to the list."

A faint tinge of color appeared now for the first time on the fair cheeks of the young Virginia girl, and she made haste to turn the conversation into another channel.

"Now, Mr. Burton, you know Mr. Brett is a neighbor of ours, and I have asked him to help me entertain Julia and you while you are here. So, for hospitality's sake, if for no other reason, I ask you to spare his life.

But, seriously, I heard one of my father's guests prophesy not long ago that some day there will come a war between the North and the South. I don't myself believe there will, Mr. Burton,—*but if there should*, would you fight against us?"

There was beneath all this raillery just enough seriousness to put Burton on his guard as to how to answer. So when he did reply, his words were couched in most diplomatic language.

"A soldier, Miss Sallie, must always obey orders. If my superior orders me to attack Vaucluse, I should have to do it. But I can assure you that I should endeavor while doing so, not to kill, but to capture its inmates alive."

The expression on the speaker's face at that moment was so militant, as to cause the fair commander-in-chief of the expedition to inform him, in her most severe tone, that she hoped it would never become necessary for him to undertake such an obviously hopeless campaign.

By this time the island was reached, and they landed on its low-lying shore, close to the cottage where resided the dusky patient, whose necessities had brought them to the island. It was interesting indeed to the northern-bred youth to see the kindliness and friendliness of the young southern girl toward this humble colored "mammy" who had been a nurse in her father's family when she was a child. In every way that he could Burton assisted her in her efforts to minister to the wants of her dusky retainer. When all had been done that could be done for the comfort of the patient, they bade her good-by and started on their homeward journey.

There was little said on the trip back. It was at the sunset hour, and neither seemed to be in a talkative mood. The light mood of the hour before had vanished and they felt the unspoken influence of their surroundings, which was such as to throw around them the spell of its softening presence. The blue sky, the glorious tints of the setting sun in the west and the purple-hued waters of the bay, all conspired to form a scene never to be forgotten. It was one of those wondrous paintings of nature—a Chesapeake sunset. With the slow passing of the daylight, there came those tender thoughts which seldom find utterance in words. They felt that this beautiful evening sunset was for them. Already the stillness of a darkening June twilight had settled over the landscape.

In the east from out the purple dusk a full moon was rising. A soft breeze had sprung up and was driving them gently toward their destination.

A smile hovered around her delicate lips. Her brilliant hazel eyes looked out from under long lashes. Her costume accentuated all the pliant graces of her figure. Together here to-night they seemed shut off from all the rest of the world. Manlike, he would have given a great deal to have known just what her thoughts were at this moment. For his own part, he would have gladly prolonged the voyage indefinitely, but she would not have it thus. "We must hasten home," she said, and the tone was such that he obeyed with soldierly promptness. A few moments later the boat touched the landing dock at Vaucluse, and the voyage to Squirrel Island was a thing of the past.

CHAPTER IX

NEARING THE GOAL

The two months' furlough came to an end only too quickly, and it was with regret that Burton returned to take up once more the life at the Academy. Once arrived there, a new and pleasant surprise was awaiting him. He learned that cavalry drill was to be introduced for the first time at the institution. From the very first he easily took high rank in that line of duty. Brett alone, among all his classmates, had the right to dispute with him for supremacy in horsemanship. They were both, indeed, masters of the art. There was nothing at the Academy that they could not ride. Both mounted. stood and jumped a horse with singular ease and grace. Nowhere were they to be seen to better advantage than when mounted and speeding at a full gallop across the drill ground. To them was allotted the task of breaking some of the most unmanageable horses that had ever been sold to an unsuspecting and long-suffering government. They could perform more feats on horseback than any other men in the entire corps, and were destined to make a record in that line which would in after-years become one of the traditions of the Academy.

Burton grew rapidly during his last two years at the Point. He had encountered another world, which had brought with it new thoughts and aspirations. He felt within him the presence of a reserve power, of ambition and of vague longings that he hardly dared acknowledge to himself. From the start he had become popular with both classmates and teachers, who recognized his purity of mind, amiability of character and modesty of demeanor. In his studies he was fair, but not brilliant. There was just sufficient strain of indolence to prevent serious application to studies. Still, he had the advantage of being able to see things easily when they interested him. Only in horsemanship and mathematics did he excel. In short, during his career at the Academy he acquired the reputation of one who could accomplish whatever he set out to do, easily, and could learn anything to which he cared to apply himself.

The years were busy ones, all full of hard work and accompanied by many trials and but few triumphs. The experience of these days brought out in the most striking manner the strength, as well as the weakness, of the cadet life at the institution. The Academy is no place for a weakling, the cad or the shirk. Here, if no place else, weakness and shiftlessness are looked upon with wholesome detestation. There is an earnestness and prophetic seriousness about the life of the institution not found in any other school in the land. Early in the race, the triflers, the drones, the stupid, and the vicious are sifted out, and only those fit to assume the duties to which the nation has called them survive the ordeal. The cosmopolitan system which governs in the choice of

cadets, the perfect democracy of the life in the institution, and the system of instruction there in vogue all tend to this end. The grade of good fellowship at the Academy is fixed by the unwritten laws of honor and charity, and all that is contained in the word manliness. It is the fearless and the self-sacrificing who become the leaders.

Soon the third year slipped into the fourth and found the class of '43 nearing the time of their graduation. One evening toward the close of his four years at the Academy Burton and his roommate, "Babe" Candee, sat chatting together in their room in the barracks. They were doing what others under such circumstances had often done before, and will continue to do for all future times. That is, they were reviewing in school-boy fashion the four years of their student life now so near completion and speculating upon what the future held in store for them and for their classmates.

"Babe," said Burton, "did you expect when you entered the Point that you would ever graduate?"

"Why of course I did, Sam; didn't you?"

"Well, I had grave doubts on the subject. You see, I had never really any chance to see what I could do until I came here. Then, at the start it seemed as though every one had so much better preparation than I, and it seemed, too, that, if any one should be dropped from the class, I would be the one. But one day I heard 'Nat' Lyon of the class of '41 say to Pat Calhoun that there were only a few men of real genius in the corps and these would never be discovered until long after their graduation. Up to that time I heard so much of

the brilliancy of this and that man that I felt certain that I was foolish to try and keep in such company. I know I can never be a leader for the 'fives' like 'Dragon' Arnaux, or 'Frank,' or yourself, but perhaps I can succeed in making a fair company officer of myself yet."

"Of course you can," replied the ever sanguine Candee. "You can never tell about these things until the occasion arises. Our class is certainly not an uncommon one, but I believe that there are some men in it that will make a good, if not a brilliant record. All they need is the opportunity. The most gifted cadets are worth nothing without this. Let war come and there will certainly be few of our class who will not be able to give a good account of himself. None of us will, perhaps, stand in General Scott's place, but most of us will fight sooner than run away."

The near approach of June found the members of the graduating class of 1843 busy with preparations, for this, to them, was a momentous occasion. The prospect of being free from the duties of the Academy, coupled with the prospect of seeing near relatives and friends, to say nothing of sweethearts, served to throw the future generalissimos of the class of 1843 into a state bordering on mental aberration. Liberal inducements were offered for the presence of youthful and charming relations of the feminine order. Fortunate indeed was the cadet whose circumstances or proximity of residence permitted the presence of relatives at his graduation.

The program for the week's festivities was all that could be desired. During the months that preceded the

closing event of the school year each cadet was full of pleasurable anticipation—that is, such cadets as were fortunate enough to be expecting friends and relatives for the occasion. As for Burton, believing that he was not to be numbered among those who were fortunate enough to expect friends at such a time, he was affected by a sense of loneliness that was new to him. That his parents could not come on to his graduation was a foregone conclusion. For their straitened circumstances would not permit of what was, for that day, a long and expensive journey. Yet, boylike, he yearned in his heart to have present on this great occasion some one who would be there solely on his account.

He longed to share with relatives and friends his own creditable pleasure at the consciousness of having attained the difficult goal toward which he had set his face so resolutely and under such peculiarly discouraging circumstances four years before.

Burton was rapidly growing into a chronic state of blues, when he received a letter from his uncle in Kentucky containing some news of the most surprising nature. It was to the effect that he and Julia would be in attendance at West Point during the coming Commencement. To this was added the unexpected announcement that Mr. and Mrs. Brett were to be there, in company with Sallie Custis. Knowing that his own parents were too poor to make this trip eastward, much as they would have been pleased to do so, he had not been able to prevent, as the days went by, frequent heart burnings when he heard so many of his classmates planning for the entertainment of their relatives and

friends. For days before the receipt of his uncle's letter he felt blue and homesick over it all, and almost wished that he could escape graduation entirely. And now he was to have his relatives with him, like the rest, and the one whose presence would give him more pleasure than any one else, was to be there as well. It all seemed too good to be true.

And so he commenced, boylike, to count the days, even the hours, that must elapse before his uncle and cousin should arrive. Secretly he had cherished in his own heart ever since their first meeting, more than four years before, the memory of this young Virginia girl who had befriended him in his hour of need. The boyish adoration of four years before had been carefully nourished until it became the strongest influence of his life. He had lived all this time, as it were, in the hope of having her some day know that he had passed successfully through his course at West Point, and that, too, largely because she had believed in him.

Not long after, while rapidly crossing the parade ground on an errand for one of the officers, one day late in May, he caught sight of Cadet Brett coming slowly toward him, escorting a charmingly dressed girl, whose figure and walk seemed strangely familiar to him. As they approached, the blood surged in his heart and his face flushed crimson as he recognized in Brett's companion none other than Sallie Custis herself. But how changed, and for the better. The girlish figure had developed into that of a more mature woman, the face was strangely beautiful and her manner was attractive in the extreme.

As the pair approached, he saw that he was recognized, and at the same time was pleased to note the smile of unfeigned pleasure that appeared on the girl's face as he approached and clasped the hand that was extended to him in friendly greeting. In its gentle pressure, as it lay in his own, he was told better than mere words could do that she was glad to meet him once more. "Why, Miss Sallie, I can't tell you how glad I am to see you." These words provoked a smile of amusement from Brett, as well as the suggestion that if Burton was unable to express his feelings in words, he might withdraw and commit them to paper. But to all this Sallie Custis paid little attention.

For a moment she glanced at the attractive face and handsome figure of the well-dressed cadet before her as if somewhat in doubt as to his identity, and then, with just a touch of coquetry, exclaimed: "You seem to be in a hurry, Mr. Burton?"

"Well, if I was, the attack is well over now," he replied, laughingly.

There was no disputing the gladness of her tone or the warmth of her welcome toward the newcomer. This was noted mentally by the handsome Southerner at her side. Burton, without perhaps fully consulting the wishes of his classmate, accompanied them as far as the hotel, answering Miss Custis' questions as to himself and the time of the probable arrival of his cousin, and then, with her request to call soon, ringing in his ears, he made his adieu. The next day Burton made good his promise, and spent a most delightful afternoon with her

walking over the Academy grounds and exploring the many points of interest round about.

And what an hour that was, spent alone with the girl of his dreams, wandering along the mazes of Flirtation Path, sitting on the rocks of the Point from which the Academy takes its name, and even going as far as to wander off to the somber precincts of the cemetery, whose grounds immediately adjoined those of the Academy. Indeed, in his present cheerful frame of mind, even tombstones had an air of cheerfulness when gazed at in company with a certain daughter of the Old Dominion. At such times their conversation was of that frankly introspective nature so attractive to the youths and maidens who are endeavoring to crowd the acquaintance of a lifetime into the confidences of a few brief days. Then, exercising the prerogative of a first classman, he took her out rowing on the river. Here they had an opportunity to visit undisturbed. She, on her part, wanted to know all that had happened to him since they parted more than two years before at Vaucluse.

"How did you ever succeed in doing so much, Mr. Burton?" was her inquiry when, for the first time, they found themselves alone. Then, in his simple, yet fascinating way, he told her the story of it all. She listened with unfeigned interest to his tale, and when he had finished, exclaimed, impulsively, "That is just splendid, Mr. Burton. I cannot tell you how proud I am of you."

And so they talked, each almost unconsciously allowing the other to see the real self as they had never done

before. Two lives, which had touched each other so lightly four years ago, now bid fair to come so close together that they must, to a greater or less extent, depend one on the other. It is a most mysterious process, this unfolding of the secrets of the heart and the holiest emotions of the soul to one not bound to us by kith or kin.

As for Mr. Carter, he became, from the first moment of his arrival, one of the boys. He soon knew by name most of the graduating class, and had become fast friends with not a few of them. From the outset he had displayed great curiosity as to the location of a certain resort known as "Benny Havens'," and claimed to experience great surprise that none of the cadets had ever heard of it. He was a royal entertainer and during recreation hours was pretty sure to be found surrounded by a group of idle cadets, whom he was entertaining by tales of a highly interesting character.

It would have been difficult to tell whether Mr. Carter took more pride in his nephew than the latter did in him. They were constantly together, so far as Burton's duties would permit. When together they appeared more like two boys than as uncle and nephew. As for Julia Carter, she never found Sam Burton half so useful, as she did during those commencement days, when her cousin found himself pestered in unexpected quarters by requests for an introduction to that "stunning" Miss Carter.

"Sam," said Mr. Carter, one day when, in company with Julia Carter and Sallie Custis, they were investigating, under the guidance of Burton, some of the de-

lightful walks with which the "Point" abounds, "what is this I hear about you and Brett trying to find which is the better man at the cavalry drill, to be given before the Board of Visitors on Commencement day?"

Burton colored, as he saw the eyes of all his companions on him, and then answered in his characteristic modest fashion.

"Oh, that is just talk. The northern cadets in our class seem to think that I am a pretty fair rider, and they want me to beat Brett, who is an uncommonly fine horseman, in the hurdling next week. The special event of that occasion will be the jumping test, he being mounted on Midnight, a particularly fine Kentucky horse, while I am to ride a vicious sorrel, named York."

"Well," said Mr. Carter, "judging from the reports I have heard, it is going to be the greatest affair of the week, not excepting the graduation ball which the girls are talking about. Well, Sam, I want you to do credit to the family and, of course, come out ahead. I have no particular grudge against Mr. Brett, but I do feel as though, for family and other reasons, you ought to win in such a contest. Don't you think so, Sallie?" said Mr. Carter, in a bantering tone.

Without looking at Burton, she said, in answer to the question: "All I can say on the subject, Mr. Carter, is this: 'May the best man win.'"

CHAPTER X

A WEST POINT ILIAD

And now had come, for the class of '43, the great event of Commencement week, the exhibition at the old Riding Academy, where the cadets of the graduating class were accustomed to settle finally the question of individual supremacy in the art of horsemanship. All other rivalries had long since been decided. This alone remained. The strife to secure appointments as cadet officers, the race for class standing or for "fives," as it was called, were over. All other momentous problems such as are wont to agitate the student world, had been definitely settled, save this one: who was the first horseman in the class of '43? In so far as hurdling was concerned, it might be said that the contest to be held would settle the question of supremacy in that regard for many years to come. This for the reason that a record was to be made this day that had never been equaled by preceding classes, and was destined not to be surpassed by any rider until a new generation of cadets had come and gone.

Of the entire class of '43, it might be said that, while in scholarship they ranked considerably below the other classes that had preceded them, none ranked higher as a

body in horsemanship. During the two weeks that immediately preceded the date of the riding contest, the spirit of rivalry between the various members of the class of '43 had grown apace. In the barracks, at meal time and during recreation hours, the one never-failing subject of discussion was the one which related to the approaching contest. While here and there other favorites might be mentioned, it was generally admitted that when the final contest should come, the victory would certainly lie between two contestants—one a representative of the South, and the other of the North. These two were cadets Brett of Virginia and Burton of Ohio. They had each been in many contests before in the old riding hall, but it was well understood that neither of the two cadets had exerted himself at such times to the utmost, each being satisfied for the present with his admitted superiority over the greater number of his classmates, and each preferring to leave the question unsettled until Commencement week. Then, in the presence of classmates, friends and a great body of visitors, they were willing that the contest should be had and the question of supremacy settled.

And now the great occasion had arrived. The contestants could scarcely have asked for a more distinguished audience. There were present the Secretary of War, Senators and Representatives in Congress, and many other leading men of the nation. General Winfield Scott, the hero of Lundy's Lane, was there, resplendent in gold lace and gorgeous uniform. Then, what meant more than all to the contestants, was the presence of relations, friends and sweethearts. The old

riding academy was crowded to suffocation, leaving hardly enough room for the contestants themselves. Among the visitors was, of course, Thomas Carter, accompanied by his daughter Julia and by Sallie Custis. The latter was looking most charming that afternoon in the daintiest of white mull, chosen especially for the occasion. She wore a large bunch of violets. She was carried away by the excitement of the occasion more than she would have cared to acknowledge, and watched each of the cadets with rapt attention. When the class, all mounted, came forth, she scanned each rider closely in an endeavor to estimate his chances of success.

The two riders who naturally received most of her attention were cadets Brett and Burton. The former rode "Midnight," certainly the most showy mount possessed by any of the cadets. The latter was a coal black Kentucky thoroughbred, peculiarly striking in appearance. He possessed a nervous, fiery temperament which caused him to jump and cavort in a manner which gave his rider little time for aught else than to hold in control the unruly tendencies of the fractious beast.

Burton, on the other hand, rode "York," a strong-limbed yet vicious sorrel, possessed, apparently, of neither pedigree or speed. Yet, a good judge of horses might have detected in the long back, strong haunches, long thin legs, narrow forehead and small feet of the steed, latent qualities which could be brought to the surface by a rider who knew how to bring them out.

It gave Sallie Custis a peculiar feeling to see, from out the rushing mass of horsemen, the calm imperturbable face of her old-time riding companion at Maysville,

and her blood seemed to surge suddenly to her face. There he was, but not the same awkward youth she had met four years ago. The trim, tight-fitting uniform that he wore indicated the strength and litheness of the figure beneath. As he brought his horse forward into the position assigned to him, under control so perfect as to indicate what he would be able to do when the real test should come later on, Sallie Custis' heart filled with admiration for this, "her cadet," as she called him. He did not glance up toward the gallery where she sat, as did Brett, who entered a moment later, for he seemed to have thoughts that day for his horse alone. As for Sallie Custis, she forgot for a moment the scene around her, in the rush of memory toward those days in Kentucky when he, as a friendless country lad, was her devoted cavalier. In a sense, she had discovered him, and no one was prouder of that fact at this moment than herself. As for Brett, he was the very picture of nonchalance. Throwing his leg over the horn of his saddle, he sat gazing up at her and waving his hand in buoyant recognition. But now the test was to begin.

First came the more simple exercises, including exhibitions of special feats of horsemanship, such as mounting and dismounting, while running the horse at full speed, picking up objects from the ground under such conditions, and all manner of spectacular tricks well known to the cadets at West Point. All this gave the spectators opportunity to inspect the contestants individually and to reward their individual powers with well-merited applause. They were truly a most attractive and interesting body of embryo soldiers. There was the

delicate Candec, whose finely featured face bore evidence of a lineage than which there was none better in all the republic. That youth yonder is the melancholy Hazlitt, who was destined soon to lose his life on the waters of the Rio Grande. Yonder is the sallow-faced Johnston, who was destined to be the first to fall in battle on the soil of Mexico, in a war not even dreamed of by the young soldiers at this time. Close to him stands a youth of exceptionally fine build. That is Chadbourne, the Kentuckian, who was soon to give up his young life fighting at Monterey. Yonder, standing together, are three cadets of more than ordinary ability, all of Northern birth, and each of whom not two decades later will be found wearing the stars of generals in a confederacy yet unborn. Standing near these are grouped nine others, who in their turn will equal and one, at least, will far surpass these last named, in rank in the armies of the Union.

But how little of what the future had in store for them did these young striplings know. With intense zest they prepared to participate in the contest that was before them. Their interest did not center so much on the display of horsemanship, superb though it appeared to the audience, as upon the hurdling contest which was to give the finishing touches to the great event. That was the supreme test, and beside this all else paled into insignificance.

Old Herschberger—the grizzled riding master, worthily famous in his day and generation—had passed the word out that when it came to the hurdling contest, the cadets would have no cause to complain that there had

been no opportunity given them to prove who was the master among them in this most exhilarating of equestrian sports. He had even vouchsafed the information that in his opinion there were men in the corps who could be trusted to raise the Academy record a full six inches, if not more, before the contest was over.

And now the hurdling contest, the most spectacular of all, was announced. Two of the regulars were stationed at the bars, and with the latter fixed at three feet, the signal was given for the riders to start. In rapid succession, each made the leap without a break in their line. Then the bars were raised six inches higher, and at this height nearly a dozen of the cadets failed in their attempt to leap the bar. Then it was raised to four feet. This thinned the ranks of the contestants down to a bare dozen. At four feet and a half all failed save the young Candee, the burly Kentuckian, Chadbourne, and cadets Brett and Burton. At four feet nine Chadbourne failed, after taking the leap at four feet and a half. At four feet ten Candee went down to defeat, but not without a spirited round of applause from the spectators for his plucky effort.

But now all eyes centered upon the two survivors, from whom the winner in the great contest must come. No one could gaze upon the superb figure and handsome face of Carl Grimke Brett without a feeling of admiration. Tall and straight as an arrow, perfectly proportioned, he looked the beau ideal of a soldier. Over his forehead hung a heavy head of curly black hair, while beneath lay piercing dark eyes, an aquiline nose and a face of dark olive complexion. It was well said of him

that day that West Point had never graduated a handsomer cadet.

But what of his competitor, who ventured to contest with him for what, from the standpoint of the corps, was the greatest prize to be obtained at West Point? Cadet Burton, of the class of '43, was far from being the equal of his opponent either in physique or appearance. Of medium height, sparse build, and with shoulders fairly erect, he possessed but little of that West Point form which had made that institution so worthily famous. But his face, to the few that might take the trouble to study it closely, gave an insight into the normal qualities that lay beneath, which well repaid the effort. The forehead, which lay beneath a heavy head of sandy hair, was broad and high. Clear gray eyes looked out from beneath heavy brows. Under a nose of somewhat large proportions were a pair of firm lips set between what might well be called "bulldog jaws." It was the physiognomy of a man of indomitable power and earnest purpose—one who possessed a power of will which nothing could withstand if it were but once aroused. And to-day it was aroused as nothing had ever caused it to be before.

This is the strangely contrasting picture of the two youthful gladiators who, with the old riding academy for an arena, were to contest that day for the supremacy in a field where neither had yet been vanquished. One had back of him the pride of a race and lineage which belonged to the cavalier stock and the bluest blood of the Old Dominion. The other had nothing back of him but a distant puritan ancestry, and a fam-

ily whose only dower had been poverty and honest work. The one had to strike for victory that there might come to the proud state of Virginia and to his own beloved South the laurels of victory. The other gave little thought to all this. But, above all else, both sought for success, that it might prove a stepping-stone toward victory in another sphere. That it might perchance win the favor of a young girl who was at that moment watching the contest from the balcony above with bated breath. But outwardly, at least, the latter had no favorite whose cause she chose to champion. If in her heart she had a choice, there was no one present there this day wise enough to fathom what it was.

Up to this time Burton had failed to cast a single glance of recognition toward Sallie Custis. Now for the first time he glanced in her direction and their eyes chanced to meet. He saw in hers such a look of friendliness, anxiety and burning interest, that he found himself involuntarily looking up to her in a manner which brought a heightened color to her cheeks. For she, in some occult way, interpreted his look to mean that he believed that she wanted him to win, and that if he had read her mind aright, she need have no lack of confidence as to the outcome of the contest.

A moment later a whispered conversation took place between the little group sitting close to the bars where the riders were to make their hurdles. This group was composed of Thomas Carter, his daughter Julia, and Sallie Custis.

"Do you think 'Sam' can do it?" whispered Julia Carter, to her father.

"Can he do it?" replied the ever-sanguine Tom Carter, mindful that he had invested all his ready money upon his own nephew in the shape of well-placed bets on the outcome of the contest. "Sam has not begun to bring out half there is in that ugly sorrel he is riding. With his power in handling horses, he could make him jump the moon, if it were necessary for him to do that in order to win this contest. He will make any hurdle that old Herschberger gives them to leap, even if he is compelled to break his horse's neck, and his own in the bargain, in doing so. You must remember, girls, that in a contest like this, with two such evenly matched mounts as 'York' and 'Midnight,' it is not the horses that count so much as it is the riders."

Now a murmur of applause from the audience gives warning that the final scene is about to commence. The two chief actors in the drama are girding themselves for the fray. With the bar at five feet, Brett was to make the first attempt. Going back to the very rear of the riding hall he put spurs to his horse and came down the sawdust riding path like a hurricane. Then, as the bar was reached, "Midnight" gathered himself for the spring and made it, missing the bar with his knees by less than an inch. Then Burton was called upon to make the test. He started his horse at a slow gallop, riding with an ease and confidence that won the applause before he reached the bar. Then came an almost imperceptible tightening of the rein, to which "York" quickly responded, and leaped the bar as easily, apparently, as he had at the first trial. When the applause had subsided, Herschberger, with a sardonic smile on his face,

as if determined to end the contest then and there, placed the bar at six feet, higher than it had ever been placed before in the annals of the old riding academy, where so many contests had been held.

There was a look of surprise on the faces of both the cadets as they saw the seriousness of the task that lay before them. In Brett's face there was a look of mingled consternation and anxiety; in that of Burton's came a look of dogged determination which those who were there to witness, were destined to see many times in later years, and then only amid the carnage of smoke and war.

Before attempting the leap, both riders dismounted and readjusted and tightened their saddle girths. While they were doing this the spectators sat motionless and watched every movement with almost breathless interest. The excitement of the moment was intense. In her seat in close proximity to the bar, Sallie Custis almost held her breath, in the tense anxiety of the moment. Now all is ready. Again Brett came first, handsome in appearance, like some modern Chevalier Bayard or a DeGuesclin, with all the recklessness of his daredevil nature aroused and determined to make the leap if it were possible for man or beast to accomplish the feat. "Midnight," too, seemed to realize what was expected of him. He was a fiery, showy brute, and it made the spectators shudder at the light, devil-may-care manner in which his rider approached the bar. He seemed to realize that this time it was to lead his master either to final victory or defeat. It was only nerves of steel and superb control which brought the beast under com-

mand, and by dint of much urging and use of the spur he brought him to the bar at a terrific speed, fully prepared for the leap. There was a pause, as he neared the hurdle, every muscle taut, and quivering. Then as he arose in the air it was seen that horse and rider were doomed to failure. The pole was caught at "Midnight's" knees, and as he felt the slight shock of the poles against the knees, Cadet Brett's heart sank within him, and his handsome face clouded, for he knew that he had met his first serious defeat.

The spectators, who had risen to their feet in their eagerness to watch the leap, stood breathless with excitement. You could almost have heard a pin drop, so intense was the silence at that moment. Now all eyes are turned on Burton. So fearful was the strain upon the little group of friends that sat close to the pole toward which he was to ride, that they scarcely breathed. The lone survivor of the contest now mounts, and with firm hold upon the rein, awaits the signal to start. The haunting fear that had lain on his heart all that afternoon, the fear of possible defeat before the eyes of Sallie Custis, had now given place to confidence. He alone of those present, knows how little of "York's" wonderful reserve power has yet been called into play.

The signal to start is given by the grim riding master. Burton does not start slowly this time, as he had done before. All notice that he carries in his hand now for the first time a riding whip. In the contests that had gone before, he had used only a high pressure of the rein to induce his horse to meet successfuily the task that lay before them. Now, raising his whip high in

his hand, he brings it sharply upon the flanks of his horse. "York," astonished and angered beyond measure, and unused to the touch of the whip or spur, rouses himself instantly and plunges forward at a break-neck speed. No longer is "York" the lazy and intractable beast that he appeared in the previous contests. Surprise and the pain and terror caused by the lash that had been so unexpectedly applied to him just a moment before, has brought out all the latent speed possessed by generations of famous racing ancestors of years gone by. All that is patent is, that Burton, by his masterly tactics, has brought out every bit of that reserve power that has so far lain dormant in the steed.

"York" is now flying down the track like a thunderbolt. In a moment he has reached the bar. Then, like a greyhound, he gathers himself together, with all his wondrous strength centered, ready for the leap. Now, as if shot from a catapult, horse and rider rise in the air with all the force and precision of some perfectly adjusted machine. An instant later, just at the right moment, and not a second too late or too soon, "York" is seen to bend his knees at the climax of his great leap. He clears the pole by a good two inches, and with his rider seated on his back as if part and parcel of himself, alights in safety on the other side. Then, with his horse still under perfect control, Burton turns and takes his place in the line.

Now the applause, which could no longer be restrained, burst forth in such volume as had never before been equaled in the old West Point riding academy. From her seat in the gallery, Sallie Custis, in

the excitement of the moment, snatched the violets that she wore at her breast and threw them down to the victor. As she did so, his eye caught hers. Without drawing rein, or even dismounting, he leaned forward, caught the flowers from the ground where they had fallen, then glancing upward with a smile of grateful appreciation, bowed his acknowledgment.

Unmindful of military discipline, some of the cadets of Northern persuasion rushed forward to congratulate him. It was indeed a great victory that had been gained that day by the unassuming cadet from the Ohio River Valley. He had beaten fairly and squarely the champion of Southern aristocracy in a field wherein heretofore he had reigned supreme. But order is soon restored, and the cadets remain mounted while some announcements are made. A moment later the corps is dismissed and the cadets again rush forward and bear Burton triumphantly in their arms from the hall. Their enthusiasm knew no bounds. Whether he would or no, they were determined to make him a hero. He had won a great victory that day, not only for himself, but for the section from whence he came, and they were bound that he should know it.

As the victors filed slowly out of the Academy building, Tom Carter turned to Sallie Custis, and said, in a bantering tone, "Don't you think the best man won this time, Sallie?"

She evaded answering the question in true Yankee fashion, by saying, "Or was it the best horse that won?"

CHAPTER XI

THE COMMENCEMENT BALL

The Graduation Ball at West Point is to the cadets —at least those sentimentally inclined—one of the great events of commencement week at the Academy. For it, preparations are made months in advance, and to it are invited the friends and sweethearts of the embryo soldiers. The ball given by the class of '43 was no different from those that had gone before or those that followed after it. And yet, it seemed to the members of that body by far the most splendid affair that had occurred in the annals of the Academy. Among those who devoutly shared in this opinion was cadet Burton, who was acting on this occasion as the escort for his pretty Kentucky cousin, Julia Carter. Brett, by virtue of his possessing earlier information on the subject of her plans, was favored with the company of Sallie Custis. His pleasure in this happy event, however, it must be confessed, was seriously marred by his defeat of the afternoon at the hands of Burton in the great riding contest. To the latter's great surprise, he found himself the lion of the occasion. He was congratulated, talked about and pointed out to an extent which would

have made a less level-headed youth vain beyond endurance.

It had, indeed, been the first great day of a life which had hitherto boasted of but few days which had risen above the commonplace of routine existence. The amount of hero worship which was being guilelessly directed in Burton's direction by numerous impressionable débutantes on the night of the ball afforded to at least one observer a vast amount of amusement. This was no less a personage than the hard-and-fast friend of the entire graduating class, "Thomas Carter, Esq., of Maysville, Ky." In the presence of several of the cadets and their sweethearts, he sternly admonished them under no circumstances to forget that all West Pointers were, under the rules and regulations of the Academy, required to abjure marriage. "But take comfort, young gentlemen," he added, "in the thought that these do not forbid a sentimentally minded cadet thinking occasionally on the subject. Neither do they, on a beautiful moonlight evening like to-night, prevent him from asking an attractive young lady what his chances would be, if he should offer himself within a reasonable time after graduation."

To cadet Burton, the sensation of being lionized on such an occasion as the Commonwealth Ball, inevitably brought to mind another occasion when his position had been far different from what it was to-night. His mind recurred to that other evening, years before, when from the verandas of his uncle's home in Maysville he had caught stolen glimpses of Sallie Custis, as she moved hither and thither in the mazes of the dance within.

Then he was an outsider, only invited as an onlooker, and present merely by the fortuitous chance of relationship to the host of the evening. Now he was part and parcel of the occasion itself, and was to meet on a plane of perfect equality, one whom hitherto he had been content to worship only from afar.

The time had now come for him to claim the two dances Sallie Custis had promised him. With due regard for his acknowledged failings as a round dancer, it had been agreed between them that he should only be required to play a speaking part. In other words, they were to forsake the brilliantly lighted ballroom for a time, while they enjoyed the moonlight from the broad verandas of the hotel. Once there the conversation drifted from one topic to another, until it touched upon the recent riding contest of the afternoon.

"You see I am wearing the laurels that came to me on that occasion," observed Burton, pointing to the little bunch of violets which was fastened securely to the handsome dress uniform which he wore.

"Yes, and I appreciate it, Mr. Burton," she said, "and now that every one else has had their chance of congratulating you on your success to-day, I want to offer you mine. It was a great victory and worthily won. You have forgotten, perhaps, but I have always referred to you since you first went to West Point as 'my cadet.' I hope that you will not consider it ungracious in me when I say, that I was not sorry that 'my cadet' won, even against such a good friend of mine as Mr. Brett?"

Of course, her companion, being thus appealed to,

had not the slightest hesitancy in assuring her that in view of the grave moral responsibility that was hers, for having brought him here, it would have fallen little short of a crime had she failed to display anything but the most exuberant enthusiasm over his recent equestrian honors. Human nature is, in the main, the same the world over, and Burton must be pardoned for his willingness on this moon-bewitched hour to pose as a hero for the benefit of impressionable young womanhood. He was not so wanting in the strategy of the amatory art as to be blind to the highly dramatic effect of his recent victory in the riding academy. He was tasting this day, for the first time in his life, the sweets of hero worship. It had not caused him to lose his wonted unaffected simplicity and affableness—only made him conscious of his temporary power and tempted him to use it to the best advantage.

It was at this point that the presence of several couples wandering along the shaded path that led from the veranda of the hotel along the river bank, brought forth from Burton the suggestion that they explore briefly its attractive windings. Nothing loth, his companion consented. Soon they passed fearlessly into the moonlit pathway with its subdued half-lights and seductive shadows.

Surely the setting of the scene was one well suited to sentiment. In the bright moonlight the surrounding landscape could be seen almost as plainly as by the light of day. In the distance Crow's Nest, Break Neck, Bull and Butler Hills were keeping silent watch over the majestic Hudson. As the youthful soldier saw, in turn,

the different monuments scattered here and there—Wood's, Kosciusko's and Dade's—he thought of these almost forgotten worthies and wondered in boyish fashion how it would seem to have such magnificent piles erected to his memory.

The mountain sides were mottled here and there by the soft shadows of fleeting clouds. Yonder lay the crumbling ruins of old Fort Clinton. Here could be seen the fires of some steamboat moving over the silvery waters below. The ball and all its manifold attractions were for the moment forgotten. It seemed as if they had suddenly been transported, by some enchantment, into a world which was all their own. As they stood together looking down upon the moonlit river, the girl at his side moved closer to him. From beneath a flimsy covering of white peered a face as fair as ever was seen within these Academy grounds. In the heart of youth and maiden, sentiment was running riot that night. Neither uttered a word or wished to break the tender silence of that moment. Yet there was that in Burton's face this night, which startled the fair Virginia girl from her dreamy mood into one more practical and less poetical. Perhaps that moment she admitted in her heart of hearts for the first time, the possibility of events not dreamed of before.

Sallie Custis had hitherto fallen far short of comprehending the nature or the strength of her feeling for the one who was sharing with her the tender enjoyment of the hour. She only knew one thing, and that was that she was very comfortable and very happy when by his side. She could no longer play the comfortable

part of fairy godmother to him. Young as she was, she saw in him an instrument which under the proper touch might be made to play almost any chord at the hands of one who knew just how to produce them. But the player must have a delicate touch.

And did the youth by her side, just stepping over the shadowy threshhold which separated the boy from the man, possess the master hand which could draw forth the love in this young girl's heart? At that very moment love, tender, true and pure, was holding him steadfast in its grasp. He would have given worlds to have told her of this love, and yet he dared not. For, until this night, he had never dared harbor even a hope that Sallie Custis—the woman of his dreams—might one day be his.

Why should be not tell her of his secret passion? Why not to-night? Where could be found a more appropriate setting for such a scene than this sequestered path on this moonlit shore of the historic Hudson? The occasion and the surroundings so full of romance, so productive of opportunity, tempted him strongly. And yet, with that intuitive caution which was to stand him in such good stead in all the years to come, he felt that the time had not yet come for him to openly commence the siege of this young girl's virgin heart. He must not yet even whisper his love for this fair daughter of the South. Her friendship—uncommingled with any touch of sentiment, was too precious to him, to risk its loss, by uttering words that might lose even that for him forever. He would bide his time, and then when the opportunity came, he would speak. Therefore, dismiss-

ing from that moment all thought of indulging in serious sentiment, he would make the most of this moonlight night on the banks of the Hudson and yet stop short of a formal avowal of his real feelings toward her.

Long hours that night, after he had retired to rest, he lay awake and lived over again not only the day that was now past, but those other days as well (so few in number) which he had passed in her company. Each was tinged with a romance all its own. Each, too, had its own story, unlike the other which preceded or came after it. And when he had traced it all to the very end, he found himself face to face with the question which nascent manhood throughout the ages has been called upon to answer, "I love her, but can I win her love?"

CHAPTER XII

THE PARTING OF THE WAYS

Commencement week at West Point is always a memorable one. With the arrival of the friends and relatives of the graduates come the august "board of visitors," with their solemn faces and awe-inspiring names. At this time the first flutter of dimity is seen among the trees, indicative of the presence of those charming bits of femininity, whose presence alone can insure the complete success of the festivities of commencement week. After this comes the presentation of diplomas, followed by the farewell serenade with its sweet minor music. The next day brings with it the last parade, beautiful and solemn to the members of the graduating class. It carried with it those tender thoughts and blessed memories of school-days, now fast ebbing away. In many an eye that afternoon there appeared a suspicious moisture, which it was difficult to hide.

Thus it was that the members of the graduating class —so soon to become officers of the regular army—took their hats off in salute to their honored commandant, feeling, at the same time, a rending of their heart-strings as if some cord had snapped. After reveille on the morrow they know they will have no place there as

their own. They will no longer have any part in the life of the Academy, but must depart, soon to be forgotten, unless perchance in later years fame shall recall to the world and to the cadet body of some future day the fact that they were once West Point cadets.

Then follows the last evening of all, the time when the "stag banquet" is laid off on the pavement of the old South Barracks to the mess hall beyond. The candles—fitted into the bayonets—are stuck down unlighted in the bright starlight of a warm June evening and everything is ready for the farewell of the graduating class of '43.

Burton and his thirty-eight classmates—all that have weathered the storms of four years of academy life—have come at last to the sad "parting of the ways." Long since the members of the graduating class entered into a solemn compact that their last night together at the "Point" should be solemnized with a grand "war smoke" that should make the occasion one never to be forgotten. The plans had long since been laid. Precious incense was to be burned that night on the altar of friendship; tender memories would then be cherished, accompanied by much wistful glancing into what the great future might hold in store for each member of the graduating class.

The swift passage of four years had delivered them all from the humble "rue de cockloft" which they had occupied as plebes, until now they luxuriated in bright sunny rooms really attractive, and approaching in comfort those of later days. Here they had shared together the good fortune as well as vicissitudes of cadet days.

Here they had lived together a life full of bright hopes and fancies. Here they had struggled together with "trig," "analytical" and "phil." Here they had voiced with unmistakable American "patois" the sweet Castilian as well as the nasal French tongue. Here, too, had occurred certain nocturnal culinary operations not contemplated by the rules of the Academy. Here the manly art of self-defense had been reduced to such an exact science that it could be formulated into an equation of black eyes and broken noses. Here had been acquired the prized power to use the weed, with impunity.

This had been their home for four years, and now they must turn their faces toward the outer world, and take their places as officers in the regular army, ready to do, and if necessary, die, in the service of their country. There they must travel with care strange and unlooked-for paths. Some, perhaps soon, would tread the quiet and dark valley, while others would pass through into the uplands beyond. A few, yea, a very few, might hope to reach the mountain tops of life.

Life had never seemed to look more beautiful than during those swiftly passing commencement days. The growing foliage, the warmer tints, the flowers, all were a sort of prophecy of the deeper joys to come. On this very evening, as they sat together beneath the elms in front of the barracks, singing their time-honored songs, listening to the tattoo of the drum corps, as it marched over the parade ground, they for the first time began to realize what their departure on the morrow really meant. Slowly a sense of the reality of it all entered

their minds and hearts and they felt like puppets in some mighty play whose heroic plot they failed to understand. At other times the barracks had seemed to them like a house of bondage, and yet, on the morrow they would find it had been a house of refuge.

And what a group it was that gathered there on that June evening in 1843, beneath the trees of the historic campus. At the head of the improvised table sat Carl Brett, as handsome a cadet as ever left West Point, a picture of perfectly developed figure and strength. Then, grouped around him from left to right, sat the rest of the class. Yonder sat "Dragon" Arnaux and Frank, the leaders in the race for the "fives," and experts in securing a "max." Next to them was "Doc" Reese, with the poetical mind. Then Nykins Bixby, the profound mathematician, "Dad" Rankin, the practical joker of the class—a downeast Yankee, and "Bob" Hamilton, a splendid fellow with a lot of the daredevil in him. Besides these there were others with whom Burton was not at all intimate, such as "Gulger" Rose, "Bullhead" Baxter, "Jeremy Diddler" Jones, "Bob" Tapley, Simon Tappity, Teddy Lamb, "Beauty" Rogers and "Nancy" Sykes. None of those present knew of the strange fate that was in store for that strangely assorted group that had been gathered there from all parts of the United States.

There were thirty-nine in the class, all present on this eventful June evening. Within three years, had they but known it, one among their number was to perish beneath the waters of the Rio Grande, at the threshold of a campaign on foreign soil undreamed of at that

hour. There were others there that night fated to fall a few years later on foreign battlefields, where the true soldier prefers to meet his fate. Still others were destined to pass away before they heard the rumble of the great conflict that was so soon to arise between the sections. Still others were to wear the star of a general in the great Civil War that was to come, enlisted on the side of a government, which had taught the art of war for its own defense, while on the other side would be found three of their number, who in their turn would wear stars bestowed by a hostile and rival government. One of them was to give up the material life to serve in the army of the church militant, while one among their number was to reach the summit of human fame as a general, one of the great commanders of all time—in that mighty conflict whose shadow had even then commenced to fall upon the country.

After the cadets had finished the feast, they sang "Willie Brewed a Peck o' Malt," and then came the speeches, which were responded to with at least a few words from one and all. Toasts were drunk to sweethearts and Alma Mater, then with the singing of "Auld Lang Syne," they dispersed, never again to meet as a class.

It was indeed a solemn hour and one never to be forgotten, this parting of the ways, for the class of '43.

CHAPTER XIII

AN AFTERNOON AT CABIN JOHN'S

Nearly two years have elapsed since the class of 1843 graduated from the Military Academy at West Point. The members thereof had been assigned to the various arms of the service and were scattered as supernumerary second lieutenants from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Among this small army of officers was to be found Lieutenant Burton, who had spent most of his time at a small post on one of the great lakes.

During the past two years he had kept up an animated correspondence with the young mistress of Vaucluse and had in immediate prospect the opportunity of seeing her in Washington, where she resided while her father was in Congress, representing one of the districts of the Old Dominion, during that period which preceded the Mexican War. Orders had been issued for the Fourth Infantry (to which Burton belonged) to rendezvous at New Orleans, preparatory to embarkment for Texas. It was well understood that this was but a preliminary step to the invasion of Mexico by the American troops, and all the officers of our little army were looking forward with a lively interest to the campaign on foreign soil.

Burton had, with no inconsiderable display of diplomacy, so arranged matters that he could go from his present post to New Orleans by way of Washington, thus giving him an opportunity to see Sallie Custis before embarking upon the perils and uncertainties of a bloody campaign. It was not long after his arrival in Washington that Lieutenant Burton presented himself at the home of Judge Custis, and requested an audience with the fair daughter of the house. Word was promptly sent down that the lady in question would see him in a few moments. While he waited the regulation disciplinary period for her ladyship to put in an appearance, the visitor employed his time wondering what the manner of his reception would be. Suddenly there came the premonitory rustle of a dress on the stairway and he found his heart beating with provoking rapidity as he found himself once more—after a separation of two years—standing face to face with Sallie Custis.

Her greeting was cordial and unaffectedly sincere, and yet there was a reserve about her manner, which, manlike, he found difficulty in interpreting to his satisfaction.

What it was which caused it he could not tell; but its presence was felt from the first moment of their meeting. As they sat and chatted together he confessed to himself that never in all her life had Sallie Custis possessed the beauty that was hers to-day, and she, on her side, recognized that, in the bronzed and soldierly personage before her, was a type of man who had

strong attractions for a woman of her clear insight and strongly sympathetic nature.

Soon Judge Custis came in and greeted his visitor in the same courtly manner which was second nature to this Virginia gentleman of the antebellum school. After a call lasting an hour or more, the visitor took his departure. After that he called daily, during his week's stay in the capital city.

One afternoon toward the close of his visit he invited Sallie Custis to drive with him out to Cabin John's Bridge. In extending this invitation, it was understood by both that this was to be their last farewell talk together before Burton should depart for the South.

It was a wonderful drive they took together that fair May afternoon. The road traveled was the one that follows the shores of the Potomac until it reaches the bridge made famous by old Cabin John. There was first the superb view of the old aqueduct bridge and the Virginia shore from the Georgetown and Cabin John's road. Then came the group of picturesque negro cabins, with their dusky denizens in the foreground. Here and there, as they passed through the bits of woodland, there was about it all just a suggestion of untouched solitude with its soft breath of thick unsunned foliage. There was everywhere a wealth of things inanimate and animate. An hour's drive, and there came to them through the thick verdure overhead a light which foretold an opening. This was soon reached, and they found themselves driving over the bridge to the famous hostelry which bears the name of

"Cabin John's." Once there they alighted and prepared to enjoy the scene about them.

The woods were redolent of perfume. The dogwood was in bloom, and there was an unspeakable charm about it all. They strolled down to the Potomac River bank and watched its turgid waters as they darted along with the picturesque canal by its side.

How charming Sallie Custis looked, in his eyes, that afternoon. Her light silken hair, gathered in a heavy braid beneath her gray hat; her mouth delicately lipped and suggestive; her eyes, clear with animation in the enjoyment of the drive. He enveloped her with royal dignity as she stood beside him that bewitching May day afternoon. Across the river was the suggestion of wooded hills and upland meadows. The charm of the picture which unfurled itself before their eyes overpowered them both. Unconsciously, as they gazed, the girl laid her gloved hand on his shoulder, and then conscious of what she had done, withdrew her hand with a word of apology and a foolish color that annoyed her beyond words to express. This little incident made her more reserved after that than she might otherwise have been. It had been planned between them that they should get an early dinner at Cabin John's Bridge and then employ the long spring twilight for their return drive to the city. Burton discovered that they had a couple of hours left before the dinner that he had ordered would be served, and he suggested that they fill in their time by taking a stroll through one of the inviting wooded paths that led from the bank opposite to that where Cabin John's hostelry is built. So,

nothing loth, she allowed herself to be enticed into crossing the bridge to a path whose secluded qualities offered extraordinary facilities for a lovers' ambush. After progressing some distance along this shaded pathway, they sat down on a convenient log to rest. Sallie Custis leaned against the trunk of a wide-spreading oak, while her cavalier extended himself in a half-reclining position near-by. Seeing some violets growing beside her, Sallie Custis proceeded to pluck and then to present them to her companion. After having passed through the trying ordeal of having the flowers pinned on the lapel of his coat by her own hands, he seemed strangely silent for a moment. Then it was that a subtle communication, yet unspoken, and perhaps not fully understood by either, passed between them, fated to bind their destinies together, in a way that neither of them could then foretell. And he, blunt and soldier-like, as became a son of Mars, felt strangely inclined to begin the attack at once. But it was evident from the sudden change in his companion's attitude toward him, that she was on her guard. So distant and dignified had she become that he even fancied that he had in some unaccountable manner offended her. And yet he could not conceal the look of admiration that passed over his face, as he studied closely the picture presented by the woman before him. Sallie Custis had, for the young soldier at her side, a wondrous fascination on this warm May afternoon.

The grace of her figure, the curves of her arm, the delicacy of her hands, the bright glow on her rounded cheek and the glow of her hair beneath her hat, were all

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carefully noted. To all this was added the fact of her presence so near to him as to make him feel strangely moved. It was indeed a dangerous contiguity with this fair woman, the idol of those dreams which he had cherished almost from the first and which he had once feared would pass out of his life some time forever. He recalled the few weeks they had passed together at Maysville six years before, their few brief rides, her quick appreciation and ready sympathy, her gentleness and kindliness toward him when he was friendless among friends, her interest in him and the encouragement given when she was herself but a girl, and, finally, the way in which she endeavored to understand him aright. He saw the delicate outlines of her face near his own; the faint shadowing of her brown hair, the soft coloring of her eyes, and in a way he was afraid of her and restrained. In his heart, he recalled the fact, that by right of birth, she belonged to a world of wealth and pleasure, from which only six years before he thought himself barred out forever. And yet within that world lay his only hope of realizing his dearest dreams. Was there any such thing as an aristocracy of love?

During these years there had grown up unconsciously in his heart a contemplative love, an unexpressed longing, yea, even the happiness of concealed hope. He saw in Sallie Custis something more than a wonderfully winning personality. She was the one girl in all the world to him.

There could never be any other, whether she loved him in return or not. Until he met her, his life had been without definite object. But, somehow, everything had

changed wonderfully since that memorable day at Maysville when he had first met her. He had himself grown rapidly during these intervening years. She had indeed opened up for him a new world and had suggested thoughts that had given rise to those strange emotions which now found lodgment in his breast.

The passing of these last few years had brought with it the consciousness of reserve power and the burning motive to reach forward and higher and higher until he could win the laurels of the world, and with it, her own dear self. To the young soldier, to win the heart of this fair girl of his dreams, had become the supreme purpose of life. Though he was a dweller with her in a land of abstract equality, his task, he well knew, was no less difficult than if he had set out to win the hand of some queen across the sea. To him Sallie Custis was as a tender hothouse plant in a world of sunshine and light. As for him, he had once seemed but a mere bit of human driftwood, that had been cast up by chance for a few glorious hours upon the shore of a lotus land, wherein she reigned supreme. He saw in her family the presence of a race gentler born than his own, but then with it came the thought that he had been taught to be a good citizen, a faithful and obedient son, and to come from honest blood was better than high lineage—if at the expense of those lofty moral qualities which alone make the man. As she had been during the past four years the strongest single influence in his life, so in the future, whether she would return his love or not, his love for her would be the one supreme passion of his life.

Looking up, the girl saw in his face for the first time

what others saw so often in later years, the evidence of perfect self-restraint and unswerving purpose. In the presence of the enemy Burton was never able to maintain neutral or defensive ground, but was always constrained to assume the offensive. So he plunged in at the first opportunity that offered itself.

They had been conversing on every topic under the sun, except the one that was uppermost in both minds. Finally, the subject of possible brevets for him in the campaign before him was mentioned, and in an unguarded moment Sallie Custis was led to remark "that she had no belief in brevets anyway. They were nothing but shams, and she hated shams."

"So do I," was the prompt response of her companion, "and I am tired of shamming any longer." But he got no farther. The color rose in her cheeks at his words, and her eyes looked up mischievously into his, as she replied.

"Mr. Burton, don't they teach diplomacy at West Point?"

Her companion's gray eyes lighted up as he replied: "Not enough to hurt us, Miss Sallie."

"I thought as much."

"And why?"

"Because you don't seem to make much use of the little they do teach."

"Why is that, Miss Sallie?"

"Diplomats never force an issue, unless they are prepared for war. Wouldn't you rather have peace between us than war?" she said, looking momentarily very belligerent.

Burton hastened to assure her that "not only was his mood far from being bent upon war, but that he made it a matter of principle never to war on women, particularly young and charming ones."

She stopped him at this point to inform him, in very severe tones, "That he must stop interfering with one of woman's most sacred prerogatives, that of being permitted to do the greater share of the talking."

"Sallie," said he, in serious tones, "if I may call you by that name for once, I came out here, not to talk to you about war, or to pose before you as one of its heroes. It was to speak of something nearer to my heart than this. Two summers ago I wanted to tell you that the greatest influence in my life has been my love for you, but I dared not speak then. Beneath its inspiration I have climbed up in my slow way step by step, to a place where in the eyes of the world at least, I might stand before you on a plane of equality and ask you to be my wife. In plain words and simple speech, which alone are at my command, it is difficult for me to tell you, even in homely language, all that you have been to me. When as a boy I came as a rough farm lad to Maysville and saw you there, you seemed more like an angel to me than real flesh and blood, and I was glad to worship you from afar. And then, somehow, you showed me kindness and my heart was full of gratitude. In your unconscious girlish way you opened up before me the gates of hope and pointed out to me a life which was worthy of your own.

"I can never forget those happy days in Maysville, when you were more than kind to me—a poor homesick

country boy, knowing nothing of the world and its ways. As you know, it was you who first suggested the thought to my mind of going to West Point and thus opening a career for myself. Then, too, that I have made a successful beginning is due largely to you. It has been the dream of my life to some day tell you of these things and more."

Here his voice trembled and he hesitated a moment before proceeding.

"And it was for you I made the venture and passed successfully into the cadet life at West Point. At the close of my second year there came your invitation to visit at Vaucluse, and my cup of happiness was complete. Of those two weeks spent there I can only say that they were among the happiest of my life. Four years passed, and then came graduation, and what was more, it brought us together again. The reverence which lay deep in my heart all those years, I found had then blossomed into something stronger and holier. Hopeless and foolish as it might seem to that world in which you move, I have learned to love you beyond all words of mine to tell. The victory in the riding school that Commencement day was dear to me only because it brought you nearer. The walk that we had together that last night at the Point seemed to me a glimpse of Paradise itself. There were things I longed to tell you that night, but I dared not. I owe much to the government which took me and which I am proud to serve. My success in this war that is now all but upon us may not be so great as that of others who will win greater rewards. I only seek such, that I may lay them at your feet. I

shall simply do my full duty, that is all. I am going to leave to-morrow to take up, after a brief visit home, the real life of a soldier. I may come back—or sleep on foreign soil, as God wills it. Before I go, whether it find any response in your heart or not, I must tell you something of the reverence and love that I bear and have borne toward you almost from the day we first met. Since that day you have been my queen, in whose service I would gladly remain if you would but let me. It is not much that I offer, but it is all that I have. You know much of my past, and from it, perhaps, you can obtain a prophecy of what the future will be. With the promise of your love I can make it anything that you would wish. I do not ask you to decide now whether you will accept this love that is offered you. I can wait."

The man then looked into the averted eyes of the woman beside him, whose pale face and rapid breathing gave evidence of the intensity of the crisis which she knew must be met without further evasion.

"And yet, may I dare to hope that you have during all these years learned to love me a little in return, and that you will promise to some day become a soldier's wife? I do not know what the future has in store, for I cannot offer you position or wealth or an illustrious name. But I feel that, with your love to inspire me, with you as the mistress of my home, there will be no place too high to attain, no task too great to accomplish. And—is—this— great—gift— to — be — mine—to—keep—always?"

While Burton was speaking, a look of tenderness

came over the young girl's face. Her soft brown eyes looked up at him from under heavy lashes which were lowered while she spoke.

"I know your worth. I have guessed something of the story you have told me to-day. No true woman exists but must feel proud to have offered to her the love of such a man as yourself. I believe in you through and through. Even as a country lad, I believed in you, and every year since has added to my faith in you. You are good and pure and true—a manly man—whom any woman might feel proud to call her friend. I cannot be truthful and deny that I knew that you cared for me in the way you say. For I have known it ever since the night of the Commencement Ball at the Point. You ask me whether I can return your love. I do not wish you to think for a moment that I do not care for you, for I do. I only question whether I love you as a woman should who is to entrust her life's happiness into a man's keeping. I admire, beyond words to express, truthfulness and unselfishness, purity and honor among men, and these you possess beyond what most men have. Then, too, I believe that the future has great things in store for you, if you keep to the true ideals which have guarded you so far. That anything will ever cause you to swerve from those ideals, I cannot bring myself to believe. I do not know just why I should tell you this. Yet love is the most wonderful gift that is given from above.

"To be frank with you," she observed, in her softest Southern tone, "I am not ready to say no, but I like you too well to say yes. While you are away on the cam-

paign that is now before you, you may write me, if you wish, and I will answer. Are you content with this?"

Burton displayed some not altogether unnatural curiosity on the subject of how much time must elapse before she arrived at a definite conclusion on the subject. She waited a moment, apparently engaged in deep reflection.

"Mr. Burton, could you keep a secret, if I told you one?"

Receiving his solemn assertion that his bosom should be a veritable mausoleum for all such treasures, she proceeded:

"Well, the truth is that I have already promised another [at this point Burton's heart sinks very low] man that he shall have an answer one way or the other before very long."

Burton's face became radiant. "But you have not answered yet?"

"No, but I don't see why that should make you look so elated."

"Because I know that the other man in the case is Brett. I have beaten him in one contest, perhaps I can in another. Anyway, if we only have that war, I might be sure of it."

"How do you make that out?" she queried, in a tone of unmistakable interest.

"He may be shot or captured, while I return in triumph to claim my reward."

"I am not so sure of that. Time alone can tell. You have my respect, absolutely and without reservation. Of the future I hardly dare speak. Your life's story

and mine have differed so widely. Leaving my own views out of the subject, you must know that my family have been accustomed to look at these matters from a standpoint wholly at variance with your own. I may say to you, in confidence, that they would not regret it if I should form an alliance already offered me nearer home. Be that as it may, my own mind is by no means made up. I care for you to-day more than I thought I could ever care for any man. Beyond that, I must say nothing more at this time. The future alone must decide this question for me. For the present be content with that."

When she had spoken thus, she suggested their return to Cabin John's. An hour later found them riding rapidly back toward the city. That evening Burton was given no opportunity for a further tête-à-tête, but was invited instead to form one of a select party at cards which had been gotten up for the occasion.

And that night, after the farewells had been said, and she had gone into the privacy of her own room, Sallie Custis gave herself over to the thought that was foremost in her heart—whom did she love, the one who had been her playmate and friend from early childhood, or the other, whom she had known little more than six years? Opening up her window, she looked out upon the moonlit city and under its mellowing influence commenced such a heart-searching as she had never made before. She passed before her in review the long years of her acquaintance with Carl Brett. How as children they had played, romped, gone to school and grown up together. How as a boy of sixteen she had made him

her hero and believed that he was as brave as a lion, as handsome as any knight of old and accomplished in all things. As she had grown older there had come over her a perception that even the hero of her girlhood dreams had his faults, and these, too, of no small dimensions.

And yet now had come to her mind other considerations that hitherto had been strangers to her. She found herself weighing in the balance his social position, the friendship of long standing existing between her family and his, and finally the prophecy that she heard on all sides that there were but few men in Virginia with more brilliant prospects than Carl Brett. And why should she not accept him? He was brainy, handsome and ambitious. He possessed high social position, wealth and education, and the match, if one were made, would be warmly welcomed in her own family as well as in his. She had always been fond of him, there was no denying that. Then why did she hesitate? Only because of the other one that had come into her life but six short years before. Unconsciously he had come nearer to her than she had ever dreamed he would at the start. At the threshold of their acquaintance she had felt only sympathy for him, perhaps it might be termed pity, on account of the very absence in his own life of all those things which made her own worth living. While Brett had always had the rôle of an invited guest at the banquet of life, Burton seemed ever like one destined to remain unbidden to the feast. While she knew life in its many and most attractive forms, he knew it in only one, and that its hardest. She was the

child of the aristocracy, he the son of the people. Harder for her perhaps than all else was the conviction in her mind, that none save herself, was willing to accept Burton at his real value. Until the day should arrive, when he should come into his own, she knew that her family would never consent to their union. For the present she could only hope that the future might hold in store that which would make it possible for them to be united.

CHAPTER XIV

GETTING READY FOR THE CAMPAIGN

It lacked but an hour of midnight on a warm July night, in the year 1845. Just at that hour, as the moon rose over the city of New Orleans, there might have been heard the steady tramp of soldiers journeying down Canal Street toward the transport which lay waiting for them on the levee. It was the Fourth Infantry, under orders to proceed to Corpus Christi, there to be in readiness to take part in the conflict with Mexico which every one saw was approaching.

As the veteran troops marched along, the bayonets glistening in the yellow light looked grim and forbidding. The deep shadows on the side of the street, the bright moonlight on the other, and the solemn quiet of a sleeping city formed a scene not easily forgotten. Among those marching figures was Lieutenant Burton, still attached to Company B of the 4th Infantry as second lieutenant. He was not destined, however, to take up at once the life of a soldier, for after disembarking at Corpus Christi he was sent into winter quarters, there to wait for the opening of actual warfare. Even the oldest officers had never seen so many soldiers together as were assembled at Corpus Christi during

the fall and winter of '45-6. On the younger officers the meeting of the regiments there made a most profound impression. Various amusements were improvised for the entertainment of the troops, and among these the theater was the favorite of them all. Here one evening during the winter some of the younger officers gave a most amusing presentation of Othello. Generals Worth, Taylor and Twiggs graced the occasion by their presence, and there was a large audience assembled. Burton's classmate, "Dad" Rankin, took the part of Othello, and it was originally planned that the former should essay the rôle of Desdemona. "Pete" Overstreet had been slated for Desdemona, but his height of six feet two inches induced the manager of the entertainment to substitute Burton in his stead. After two rehearsals Rankin refused to play Othello to Burton's Desdemona, on the ground that the latter's impersonation of the part was a travesty on fair womanhood. So the officers chipped in, and, to Burton's great relief, sent to New Orleans for a professional, whose sex and experience were more fitting for the part.

About this time Burton was appointed regimental quartermaster. In this connection he frequently picked up for a song many wild horses, which roamed the country roundabout. He soon became known all over the camp as the most remarkable bronco-buster in the army assembled there. It was about this time, too, that he had the misfortune to lose half a dozen horses that he had acquired in his official capacity as quartermaster for the regiment. He duly reported this loss to the general commanding. Some one questioned General

Taylor in regard to this matter, and that veteran officer observed in a manner unusually facetious for him: "Yes, I understand that Lieutenant Burton has lost four or five dollars' worth of horses recently."

This was told around the camp and provoked many a laugh at Burton's expense. But the days of peace for those in the camp at Corpus Christi were numbered. On the 9th of March, 1846, the bugles of the line sounded the assembly, and Taylor put his army in motion by easy stages for the line of the Rio Grande. Of what occurred there Burton told in a letter addressed to a certain fair friend of his at Vaucluse. It was written on the 10th of May, 1846, from the battlefield of Resaca de la Palma, and read as follows:

My Dear Miss Sallie: As all the other military lights are sending in reports of their prowess in battle, I somehow feel a yearning desire to send in mine. I have just been through my first two battles. Before the next one is fought it is pleasant, while still alive, to write and tell you about them. I am writing this in my tent by candlelight. Overhead the stars are peaceful, and everything is quiet. You would never imagine from an inspection of our camp that we had gone through a battle to-day. But over in the hospital that has been established here on the field, is the sad evidence of it all. The Mexican commander, Ampudia, calls us the "barbarians of the North," and, owing to the absence of barbers here, we certainly look the part. We call the battle that was fought yesterday "Palo Alto," and the one of to-day "Resaca de la Palma." As perhaps

you know, Cadmus Wilcox, Sidney Smith, Jenks Beaman and I are messmates, and great times we have had together telling each other how this campaign should be fought, and offering bets as to which would be the first to run before the enemy. In this we are frequently joined by Carl Brett and others of my West Point classmates who are with the army. So far General Taylor has not called for our assistance in planning his campaign, but each of us has a different and entirely unique plan for outgeneraling the "greasers." When we crossed the Rio Grande our regimental band played "The Girl I Left Behind Me," and I wondered if there was any one else in the army thinking harder about her just at that particular moment than myself. Next came a long march, and our first night's destination was reached. On all sides the white tents went up, and the stores were piled up for the night. The picket duty that night seemed for some reason considerably less like a form than usual. All the younger officers grew a trifle nervous and wondered what the morrow had in store for them. We soon began to catch glimpses, as well as gather information of cavalry movements nearest to the Mexicans, which the wise men of the army—and there are many—say betokens a force of the enemy not far away. Reports drifted in all day long from various sources that the enemy was in large force somewhere in the vicinity, and in a peculiarly fierce fighting mood. All of this, of course, had a sobering effect on those who had boasted of their love of fighting.

After a day of interminable length, came twilight, and the bugle sounded the welcome "Halt." The can-

non was parked and the horses watered and fed. For a time each busied himself with his own duties. Here and there you could see men going for water, cutting wood, starting fires and building camps. As the fires were lighted the cold and darkness disappeared. The sparks shot upward through the darkness. The forest was lighted up with ghostly lights and fantastic shadows. There were dancing lights and a thousand different calls. Then, with supper eaten and pipes filled, we tried to imagine ourselves in the most delightful mood imaginable. It ended in failure, for, to tell the truth, we all felt decidedly solemn and wondered if that night was our last on earth. I confess that I did not sleep much the night before the battle of Palo Alto. A combination of howling coyotes, buzzing mosquitoes and solemn thoughts kept me awake. But I had plenty of company. None of the others in our tent slept either, but we assured one another the next morning that we had slept finely, and that we were not one bit nervous. I suppose each of us thought that he spoke the truth. Next morning the order came for the regiment to advance. The way we followed was across streams. In the distance already came the sound of the sharp report of the carbines or the heavier notes of the "Belgian" and "Enfield."

We went through the dense Mexican chaparral and came out upon the open plains. This was the battlefield of Palo Alto.

There General Taylor formed his line of battle. Perhaps your father may be interested in knowing just how the troops were placed, even if you are not. The right

wing was under Twiggs, who commanded the Third and Fourth Regiments, Ringgold's battery and the eighteen-pounders under Churchill. The Third and Fourth Infantry formed a separate command under Garland. The left wing was commanded by Belknap. In addition to the troops I have already mentioned, there were two squadrons of cavalry in the field under command of May and Kerr.

The field of battle was wonderfully picturesque. Upon its level surface grew the scarlet bloom, the Mexican poppy and the indigo plant. Our army, after filling canteens at the spring, took up the line of march along the open plain, here a mile in width, and moved to within seven hundred yards of the Mexicans. The battle was opened by a Mexican battery on the right, firing both grape and round shot.

Then there was a halt, and Taylor deployed his columns in line, the two eighteen-pounders opening the battle. Ringgold and Duncan advanced with their batteries on the right and opened fire. The fight was mainly an artillery battle.

Arista, the Mexican commander, came very near being outflanked by our army. Ringgold's battery and the eighteen-pounders were pushed toward the enemy's left flank, supported by the Fourth Infantry and the Fourth Brigade. Once the Mexican cavalry, with two pieces of artillery, under Torreon, made a detour of our right with a view to turning it and capturing the wagon trains. This movement was defeated by the Fifth Infantry and two pieces of artillery, sent just at the opportune moment.

It was at this time that Mackintosh, of the Fifth Infantry, fired a quick volley which emptied many a saddle. The Fourth Infantry, in which my company is enrolled, supported one section of Ringgold's battery in advance of the heavy guns, and while doing so, we were compelled to remain exposed to fire without the possibility of returning it. The cannonade continued for an hour and then the grass in front of Duncan's battery caught fire, which with the heat and smoke, became intense. When this occurred, the eighteen-pounders, Ringgold's battery and the Fourth and Fifth Regiments advanced. Then came a glorious charge of May's dragoons, well supported by the Fourth Infantry, but they were compelled finally to fall back. It was a combat largely of field artillery. Then Ringgold was struck by a round shot and carried from the field of battle to die. Page, too, fell soon after.

Once, during the day, owing to the absence of my superior company officers, I found myself in command of the company. I felt keenly the tremendous responsibility, for there fell to me one of the really hard tasks of a soldier—that of standing under fire without the privilege of returning it.

The fight continued until night, when the Mexicans retired, leaving the field in the possession of Taylor. During the night Arista fell back to a strong position on the dried bit of stream called "Resaca de la Palma." And now, I suppose, like all women, you are curious to know how a man feels under fire. Well, I can only speak for myself, and in this wise:

There is nothing that produces so profound an im-

pression as a real battle—nothing that so stirs and tests the soul within one, which so expands and strains the functions of sensation, so awakens all the depths of one's nature. There is nothing which so stimulates even the humblest soldier to deeds of heroism and self-sacrifice. Nothing which so surcharges and permeates one's receptive faculties, and so employs and absorbs all the powers of one's mind and body. Human nature under such circumstances finds it difficult to sustain this greatest strain and test.

But I must continue my story. After Palo Alto, our troops slept upon the battlefield, only to awaken on the morrow to take up the battle of the previous day.

This we called the battle of Resaca de la Palma. The Mexicans had formed for battle on the banks of a succession of ponds. They had thrown up dead trees and brush in their front and had placed their artillery to cover the approaches and open places. I was in the right when the order for the whole army to advance was given, and I led my company (of which I was then in command, owing to the absence of Captain McCall, my company commander) through the thicket, wherever a cleared space could be found, taking advantage of any protected spot, that would expedite our progress toward the enemy. At last I got pretty close up, without knowing it. The balls began to whistle over my head, cutting the chaparral here and there. As I could not see the enemy, I concluded that I would not be court-martialed if I ordered my men to lie down, provided I did not follow my natural inclination and do the same myself. I gave this order, and it was remarkable how

quickly the troops obeyed it. Soon after this the Mexicans commenced to give way all along the line, and it occurred to me that this was the proper psychological moment for me to greatly distinguish myself. So, finding a clear spot in front of us, separating two ponds, where could be seen a few Mexican soldiers, I fearlessly ordered my men to charge. To my disappointment, there was no resistance, and we rounded up a Mexican colonel, who had been wounded, together with a few teamsters and soldiers. You have no idea the pleasure it gave me, at that moment, to think that I had captured a lot of prisoners. I think my great hobby in war, if there ever comes another, is to be the taking of prisoners. But just as I was getting ready to send my extraordinary capture, under escort, to the rear, I discovered, to my deep chagrin, that the ground had already been charged over by our men. Thus my first experience in independent command of a large body of men (sixty all told) ended in humiliation. Anyway, I have the consolation of knowing that my intentions were good, even if the results were hardly commensurate with the desires and ambition of the commander.

But now must come a note of sadness in this story of battle. You remember my roommate, Chadbourne, to whom I introduced you commencement week, at the Point. He fell, mortally wounded, on foreign soil. He died as a soldier loves to die, on the field of battle. No man was more beloved than he at the Academy. Ever amiable and pure in heart, he was truly a man in whom there was no guile. He lay on the battlefield until evening, when for the first time we had leisure to attend

to our dead and wounded. He was given a soldier's burial the next evening, just at dusk. The hour and the burial itself, was most impressive. The sun had just set; the clouds, piled in pyramids, were tinged with golden light; the pale moon in the east, the flashes of lightning in the north. He was buried about a mile from the camp, on a beautiful bluff. The service of the dead was read by the light of a torch. Three volleys were fired over the grave. The escort wheeled into column, and then left him to that sleep that knows no awakening. Nothing that has occurred since I bade you good-by in Washington has affected me so much as poor Chadbourne's death. But he died as a soldier loves to die, on the field while in the line of his duty.

I must close and attend to my routine work, which still goes on. Please write soon, for letters are the brightest spots in a soldier's existence.

Always yours,

Sam'l Burton.

CHAPTER XV

THE MAKING OF A SOLDIER

The passing of poor Chadbourne, at Resaca de la Palma, in May, 1846, was not the only death of a classmate that Burton was called upon to mourn during the Mexican War. On May 18th of the same year, Stevens of the "Rifles" was drowned while crossing the Rio Grande. Hazlitt was killed at Monterey four months later, while Johnston fell at Contreras on the 9th of August in '47.

But there was little time to mourn for the dead. Soon after, in rapid succession, came uninterrupted victories for the American army. One of the earliest of these was Monterey. Here Twiggs' division, to which Burton belonged, was stationed at the lower end of the city. After days of reconnoitering, Taylor attacked, on the 21st of September, 1846. The Fourth Infantry was in Garland's brigade of regulars, on the extreme left of the line. Two companies of the Fourth advanced to storm a fortification, in which Lieutenants Hoskins and Woods, both messmates of Burton's, fell mortally wounded. When the Fourth Infantry was ordered to support the artillerists, while they were intrenching, Burton was directed to remain in charge of the camp

and public property during the regiment's absence. They were away the entire night and in the morning fire was opened on both sides with great fury. Though Burton, as regimental quartermaster, was exempt from duty on the firing line, the spirit of the combat which he found had possession of him acted like a fever, and he soon found himself in the midst of a charge. The regiment was now directly under the fire of the batteries of the Block Fort and of the musketry at the same time. Nearly one-third of the troops engaged were killed or wounded in the space of a few moments. It was, indeed, a fiery ordeal, for the young soldier, scarcely three years out of West Point. But a more severe test than even this was yet to be his. While advancing slowly toward the Plaza, under an incessant, and at times murderous, fire from the Mexican troops located on the flat adobe roofs of the houses, behind parapets of sand-bags, it was discovered that the ammunition was growing perilously low. At this crisis in the affairs, General Garland (the brigade commander) expressed a wish to get a message back to General Taylor, to the effect that the ammunition was low and that he must have more sent him immediately, or be otherwise reinforced. Deeming the errand too perilous to order any one to do it, he called for volunteers. Instantly Lieutenant Burton, who stood near, stepped forward and offered to be the bearer of a message to "Fort Number One," a mile back outside of the city, where Taylor had his headquarters. The offer was accepted, and he was told to start at once. Taking his horse to the shelter of a near-by house, he adjusted himself "Comanche

fashion" on the side of his horse farthest from the enemy, with only one foot holding to the cantle of the saddle, and one arm over the neck of the horse, catching at his mane. All being ready, he plunged his spurs into his horse, and dashed out on a dead run. Colonel Garland said of him, as he watched him dash away to what seemed almost certain death, 'There goes a man of fire." Now, if ever, would come into full play that skill in horsemanship, which had won him victory on another occasion, more peaceful than the one in which he was now engaged. He knew that in volunteering for such a ride he was taking his life in his hands, but, like the true soldier that he was, he regarded it all as part of the fortunes of war. The moment he emerged from cover he found himself under a sweeping artillery and musketry fire from forts and houses. At the street crossings the fire was particularly severe, and these he crossed like a streak of lightning. It would have required a marvelous command of the steed that bore him to have made the trip in safety in such manner, even without the accompaniment of the grim messengers of war. But then, it must not be forgotten that the best horseman in Taylor's army was the rider of that horse as it passed unscathed through a veritable storm of missiles.

Once, on the way, he jumped an earth wall four feet high, making the leap with ease. But at last the fort was reached in safety and the order to send the needed ammunition was given. But before it had fairly started, the troops came pouring back. With fine gallantry, they had fought their way into a spot where they found

they could not stay. As Burton described it, some time later, to his Uncle "Tom" Carter, the regiment found itself, on this particular occasion, like the man who caught a wild boar. When friends came up to congratulate him, they found him with his two hands firmly grasping the hind legs of the boar. In response to their congratulations, he replied: "Yes, I did pretty well to catch him, but I'd take it mighty kindly if some of you fellows would only help me let him go."

But that night ended the fighting. In the camps, after the battle, Burton's exploit in his mad ride through the streets of Monterey for ammunition, was the talk not only of the Fourth Infantry, but of the other regiments as well, to whom the story had now been passed on from man to man. And his reward in this instance was swift. Through the death of Lieutenant Hoskins, the regiment had lost its adjutant, and Burton was appointed in his place. From this time on, he performed the duties of that office as well as that of regimental quartermaster.

And so the campaign progressed, one American victory following another. While always doing his full duty, it was only at "San Cosme Gate," just inside the walls of Mexico, that Burton particularly distinguished himself. Here he conducted a small but effective independent movement of a small body of volunteer troops. This movement was stopped at a cross-road, which the enemy defended from behind a breastwork and from the roof of a house in the rear. While skirmishing was going on in front, Burton made a skillful reconnoisance which ended in his taking

half a dozen men, and leading them around on a run to the rear of this building. There he found Captain Brooks of the artillery, who at once, waiving all questions of rank, followed him with his own company. After a skirmish, it was found that the position taken was too advanced and it was given up. Later in the day, through a somewhat more independent reconnoitering, which was fast becoming a favorable pastime with him, Burton discovered a church, off to the south of the road, the belfry of which appeared to command the ground back of San Cosme. Securing the co-operation of an officer of the voltigeurs, with a mountain howitzer and men to work it, the gun was, after much effort, taken to pieces, and afterward placed in position in the belfry of the old San Cosme Church. Then shots were dropped in upon the enemy, creating great confusion. The effect of this choice bit of independent strategy on Burton's part was so marked that General Worth sent Lieutenant Pemberton (afterward Lieutenant-General of the Confederate Army, commanding at Vicksburg) to bring the youthful strategist to him, that he might congratulate him in person for his effective work. "That was fine work of yours, sir, every shot told," was the commander's comment. At Molino del Rey Burton won his brevets for bravery. At this battle Burton particularly distinguished himself. He was everywhere on the field, fighting hand to hand with the enemy, always cool, swift and unconcerned. His still more spectacular feat had brought him no brevet, though it had made him solid with his men.

Those days in Mexico were great days for Burton.

It was the school-room for his larger and fuller work. Here he had opportunity to observe two commanders of great ability, at work in actual war. He learned that it was possible for an army to cut loose from its base of supplies. He saw the advantage of flank movements, as shown by Taylor's maneuvers at Monterey. He appreciated the value of co-operation of the army and navy, as exemplified at Vera Cruz. He saw at Cerro Gordo that prisoners could be disposed of by paroling. At Cherubusco he learned to appreciate the special value of artillery and cavalry. He learned that simplicity, army regulations and discipline are potent factors. He learned also the value of co-operation between armies. There, too, he came in contact with many officers, that afterward became famous in the far greater conflict that was to come.

At Contreras he fought with Chas. F. Smith, his old commandant in the Academy, who was the grandest figure of that day's fight, and where Johnston, a much-beloved classmate, was killed. Then came Vera Cruz, with its dramatic capture by the army, under the invincible Scott, aided by the navy working under Perry, Tatnall and Porter.

Here he commenced to hear much of the engineer officers, Robert E. Lee, Geo. B. McClellan and P. G. T. Beauregard, and some little of others.

Later came Cerro Gordo, that perfect battle fought by the regulars under Scott, Worth, Twiggs and Quitman, aided by the cavalry under Harney.

Lastly, came Molino Del Rey, Chapultepec and the triumphant entry into the halls of the Montezuma.

When the time came for rewards, Burton received his commission as First Lieutenant, while Brett was given that of Captain, in the regular army. Burton's brother officers were not at all pleased by this, and ascribed it to influence at home. At any rate, from that hour dated the coolness which sprang up between the young officers, which in time served to break forever the friendship of their Academy days. In its place there ultimately came positive dislike and distrust. However disappointing the matter of promotion may have been to Burton, he had no reason to complain of his superior officers when they came to send in their reports of the campaign. He was mentioned honorably in that of his division commander, General Worth; by his brigade commander, Col. Garland, and by his regimental commander, Major Francis Lee, and by his company officer, Captain Horace Brooks. So, taken all in all, it might truthfully be said that none of the officers of his own age—aside from a very few among the engineers—attracted more attention and behaved with more real credit to themselves, than did Samuel Burton, of the West Point class of '43.

CHAPTER XVI

CUPID AND MARS

The scene shifts once more to the banks of the Ohio and the picturesque village of Maysville. The late fall of 1848 witnessed the return of Samuel Burton from the Mexican battlefields, at the close of a war where the American troops had acquitted themselves everywhere with uniform brilliancy. His record during that marvelous series of battles, in all of which he had participated save that of Buena Vista, had been most creditable. He had entered the campaign a brevet second lieutenant, fresh from West Point, and he left it a first lieutenant and a veteran of a two years' campaign on foreign soil. He had obtained during this time the confidence of his superiors, the respect of his brother officers and the enthusiastic devotion of the men in his command. This performance of the American army of invasion had been so magnified by the press of the country, that each participant in its campaigns had become, as it were, a hero. To no one did the truth of this statement apply more directly than it did to Lieutenant Burton, on his return home on a furlough in the late fall of 1848. To his surprise, on his return to his native heath he found himself lionized beyond what a

modest man cares to endure. While pleased with the freely expressed gratification felt by his parents at his excellent record, he nevertheless found the fulsome attention of his one-time neighbors and friends exceedingly distasteful to him.

It must not be supposed that the movements of the youthful warrior were entirely a matter of conjecture at this time, to at least one member of the household at Vaucluse. The facilities afforded by the national government for communication between the army in the field and the friends at home had been made such good use of by at least two personages, that a visit by Sallie Custis to her kinsfolk at Maysville had been so well timed, that the month of November, 1848, found her within fifty miles of Lieutenant Burton. It must not be inferred that the latter was wanting in filial affection, because in this particular instance he hastened off for a visit to his Uncle Tom Carter, at the close of a two weeks' sojourn in his old home.

So it happened that one November afternoon, as the *Daniel Boone* neared the familiar wharf at Maysville, Burton was not stunned with surprise to see in a carriage not far from the landing, seated there with his cousin, and waving her handkerchief to him, the one who had been so constantly in his thoughts during his days and nights on the battlefield. He was, however, completely overwhelmed with the extraordinary warmth and enthusiasm of his reception at the hands of the good citizens of Maysville. The residents of that patriotic community seemed determined to celebrate on this occasion the signal success of American arms on foreign

soil. No matter how humble his own part in the affair, he did personify to their minds those victories which had stirred the nation to its very remotest corners. So it was that this modest subaltern in the recent conflict found himself the recipient of honors which would not have been unfitting for Scott or Taylor themselves. The Academy boys were out in full force, proud to think that the one in whose honor all this was, had been only nine years before one of their own number. The village officials were there, accompanied by the inevitable band, with its rendering of popular airs. In fact, the whole community had turned out *en masse* to welcome in that whole-hearted Kentucky fashion, a youthful soldier who was a nephew of one of their most respected townsmen, and who had at one time passed a portion of his school days in their midst. No wonder that in the face of the tooting of steamer whistles, the strains of music, and the cheering of the assembled multitude, the young lieutenant felt, for the moment, a most unsoldierly inclination to retreat. As the crowd caught sight of this slight, modest young man in army blue, they found some difficulty in associating him with the same person who had made that daredevil ride for ammunition at Monterey and had mounted the cannon in the belfry tower at San Cosme Church at Belen Gate.

Of course, the first to greet him as he stepped off the steamer, was his uncle, who grasped him by the hand and fairly hugged him in the exuberance of his feelings. Then, accompanied by the official dignitaries of the occasion, he was escorted, amid the cheers of the others, to the carriage where Julia Carter and Sallie Custis sat

waiting for him. There was only time for a grasp of the hand and a word of greeting, until Tom Carter seized the reins and drove them away through the crowd that encircled them on all sides, to his own home.

How often during the past two years had he pictured this meeting with Sallie Custis. He had dreamed of it by night and by day, whether in the barracks at Corpus Christi, or on the battlefield in a foreign land. And how wholly different it had been from what he had planned. For the moment he was almost incensed at his friends for having thus shattered one of his best-beloved day-dreams. And yet, did he but know it, the whole affair was but a highly realistic bit of scene-painting, in a drama which had been passing before the eyes of Sallie Custis ever since the day he had first crossed her path here in Maysville, exactly nine years before. It was a love drama, in which another act must soon be played.

The days that followed were ones of unalloyed enjoyment for the soldier visitor. Hours spent with his uncle, calls upon Professor Dolbier, brief visits with former schoolmates, forced attendance upon various social functions arranged in his honor, and last but not least long rides and walks with Sallie Custis, filled every moment of his time.

One afternoon near the close of his visit he invited her—with considerable conscious embarrassment—to accompany him on a ride to "Indian Rock." To this she gave a ready assent. It was the first time they had visited that spot since the memorable occasion when as boy and girl they had gone there, and had had the talk

which resulted in the formation of the resolution on his part to try and get the appointment to West Point. He had purposely postponed the visit to "Indian Rock" until the very close of his visit at Maysville. And now that time had come. An hour later found them sitting together once more on the very spot where nine years before they had sat and talked of the separation that was then before them. Much of great moment had happened in the intervening time. The passing of the years had wrought many wondrous changes for him. He was no longer the aimless and hopeless country lad of that first period of her acquaintance. He had reached man's estate and with it he had attained much that was worth while. He had, by his own unaided efforts, mastered a profession. In the sterner school of experience he had been tried thoroughly and had proved that he possessed the qualities of which heroes are made. He had won for himself social position and a name. He could now meet this fair daughter of a proud Virginia family on a plane of equality. He had made good, and even a cynical world had publicly recognized it. But to-day his mind gave little heed to the triumph of a career which was at best only half commenced. His thoughts were all of the companion of his ride who, on her part, during these years had passed from the fair promise of girlhood to the full bloom of perfect womanhood.

"Miss Sallie, do you remember what you said to me that last afternoon that we were here, just before you left for Vaucluse, so long ago?"

"We said a good many things then, if I remember rightly."

"Yes, but I mean in regard to my going to West Point and getting an education and the opening of a career for myself. Of course, you were a very young girl at that time, and you didn't say it in those words, but that was the effect of it."

"Yes, I remember it perfectly."

"Do you mind my telling you again that it is to you I owe the inspiration which gave me the courage and ambition to make the effort to accomplish all those things which then seemed so difficult of accomplishment?"

The color mounted to Sallie Custis' cheeks as she caught the earnest gaze of her companion, and for a moment she was at a loss for a reply. But he did not wait for her to speak. His face, which was ordinarily somewhat immobile and expressionless, was now full of animation and had suddenly become transfigured with a light, as it were, from within. His voice lost its customary slowness of enunciation, and his usual hesitation of speech had vanished completely. He threw caution to the winds, and plunged into that plea of the heart wherein a true man stakes his all.

"Sallie, you gave me reason to hope that afternoon at Cabin John's Bridge. It was this 'hope' which has sustained me on every field of battle during the war which has just closed. The time has come when I must lay open my heart to you and tell you again what I told you then, and more that I have longed to say since last we met. For to-morrow I go back to my regiment, which will soon take up quarters in California. It may be long before I can see you again and if I wait until then it may be

too late. I don't know why it should be so, but the hardest thing in the world for me to do is the thing I have longed to do most, and that is to tell the woman that I love, the story of that love. You know that I have loved you from those earliest days, when in the midst of your own carefree life of pleasure you found time to sympathize with me in my dull round af daily tasks. Boy though I was, I worshiped the ground that you walked on and would have counted it a pleasure just to be near you, so that I could see and speak to you sometimes. Then during my cadet days it was my dream to think of you as my sweetheart, though I never dared hope for the realization of that dream. I have in my make-up a saving sense of the realities of life, and I never allowed myself to think that it was possible to win your love, until the day when Carl Brett and I battled for supremacy in the old riding academy at the 'Point.' That day something seemed to say to me that the prize for which we both rode was not the championship of the class, or even of the Academy, but that the real prize was the favor of one girl. It seemed to me then that we had gone back to the middle ages, when the knights used to battle together for the gift of a ribbon from the hand of some fair lady. And so I entered the contest against one whom I knew had been a sort of a hero to you since your childhood days, and I won. When I looked into your eyes that day, when you offered your congratulations, I saw nothing but pride in my victory, and I took heart. It told me that I had at least a fair field before me. Then came my visit to you at Washington, and there my courage all but failed me. I saw how different

your home, life and surroundings had been from my own. You had wealth and luxury beyond what my wildest dreams had pictured for you. When I thought of your father and mother, and thought what their hopes and plans for you must be, it seemed as if in them, alone, were barriers too great. Whichever way I turned I saw only obstacles in my way. It all then seemed so hopeless. I saw you then in a new rôle. Your father one of the great men of the nation, and you the belle of the nation's capital. But I found you unspoiled by it all, and on that never-to-be-forgotten talk at Cabin John's Bridge I cast caution to the winds and spoke out from a heart that had grown restless under a love that had never until then found utterance in speech. There it was that you gave me reason to hope, nothing more. And then came the Mexican War. It brought with it some of the rewards that men of the army count dear. My record was such that you wrote me letters in which you said that you were proud of your cadet, and that when the war was over I must come to you and be knighted again. Of course, this was uttered in jest, and yet I determined to take you at your word, and ask for that which the knightliest of men might be proud to receive—the gift of your love. And so, Sallie dear—I have come to ask if you will fulfil that promise and knight me with your love."

He had paused now, and was looking straight into the lowered eyes of the woman of his choice. She did not answer him at once. She knew, as most women know, that some day the question would be asked and that she must answer it. And yet, now that it had come, she

found herself in a fierce conflict of opposing emotions. On the one side was the thought of her family, of that proud mother with her prouder lineage of Virginia forebears. Of that father, of whom she was so proud and who had so much faith in her. She knew full well that they would not willingly listen to the thought of her marrying a man without fortune, family or position, no matter how estimable he might be personally. She knew only too well that they had long ago set their hearts on her marrying Clement Brett, who had been a most persistent suitor for her hand, and whose family and fortune were equal to her own. But could she give up this manly man—him of the clean mind and the grave, true heart, even for the sake of those she loved so dearly, and to whom she owed so much? And while the struggle in her own mind went on, the man, with wisdom far beyond his years, kept silent. Finally she spoke:

"Soldier boy, if you can be patient and faithful and true, I think all will come out right. But for the present you must be content with this," and her voice sank as, hiding her face on his shoulder, she whispered, "My love is yours, treasure it well."

As she finished speaking, her eyes lifted to his, and Burton, looking down in them, saw an illumination such as is born of perfect trust and more—it was the love-light. Then, gently and with a reverence that was beautiful to look upon, he drew her close to him and lifting the face which was hidden on his breast to his own, he kissed the lips that still trembled with the words which had been wrung from them at love's confessional.

In the happiness of that moment—the greatest that either of their two lives had ever known—all the doubts and perplexities of the past and present were forgotten. Even the future had no terrors for her as she lay nestled in those strong arms. And thus they talked of the past, reveled in the present and planned for the future. He could feel the beatings of her heart, as she told him that it was the thoughts of him upon the battle-field that had wrung from her the secret of her own heart, and it was he alone who held her love. And when a love such as hers is self-confessed, it is never content until there is complete surrender to the object of it all.

One condition only she exacted from him, and that was that their engagement must for the present remain a secret between themselves alone. He must go to his lonely life in the barracks of a remote fort on the California coast, without telling the world of their plans to spend their life together, trusting to her that before he returned she would have brought about the full consent of her parents to their union.

In parting, she gave him, amidst many kisses, a parting injunction which he had occasion to repeat over to himself many times in the days of his exile which were now close upon him.

"I have given you my heart, dear love, wholly and unreservedly. It is now in your keeping, whether the world knows it or not. Be worthy of the trust and all will come out well."

CHAPTER XVII

LIFE AT FORT HUMBOLDT

The sun is setting blood-red in the waters of the Pacific, giving to the lone observer on a sandy dune just north of Fort Humboldt, on the California coast, one of the most superb nature pictures to be found anywhere in the world. The observer in question was a man of thirty years, or thereabouts. He was sitting on a log some distance from the fort, and utterly alone. A closer glance would have revealed the features of Captain Burton, recently appointed to the command of a company at this distant outpost of civilization. Nearly a year had passed since the day he had bidden the last tender farewell to Sallie Custis in Maysville. During that time much had transpired.

In the month of December, 1848, Samuel Burton, now a captain in the regular army, had duly reported for duty to his regimental commander at Pascagoula, Mississippi. He there learned from Captain Brett, commanding Company K, of the Fourth Infantry—to which his own company also belonged—that the regiment had been ordered to proceed at once, via Panama, to California. The orders so given were duly carried

into effect and a few months later, in the early summer of 1849, found the regiment at San Francisco, California. From thence, after a few weeks' rest, Burton's company embarked for Fort Humboldt to do garrison duty there, with other companies of the same regiment.

Never would the young soldier forget his first view of the beautiful bay as he saw it early in the morning of a beautiful October day in 1849. To the west, the wide stretches of the Pacific had set its hard lines against the steady glare of the California sky in an irritating metallic glitter. In the distance could be seen a succession of domelike hills and beyond the coast a range of snow-capped mountains. Passengers in the passing steamers saw no change in that misty undulation, save a mass of turreted peaks with wooded crests and timbered ravines. Even sound was absent. As, later, Burton became better acquainted with his surroundings, he learned that when the ever-present fog stole inland, all distance, space, character, and locality vanished but the distant hills upon which the sun still shone, bore the same monotonous outline. That often amid such scenes, the sun would sink blood-red in the western horizon, and a damp breath would come upon the picture until it faded and became a confused gray cloud.

When the vessel bearing Burton's company entered Humboldt Bay, the little struggling town of Eureka could be seen to the right, three miles inland, while nearby was the fort itself, made of hewn timbers with barracks plastered within and adorned outside with chimneys of stone. This fortification, styled "Fort Humboldt," stood on a square plot of ground surrounded by

dark forests of spruce and pine. From it a magnificent view of Humboldt Bay could be obtained. Burton had not been long stationed at this distant outpost of civilization until he had explored the country, both afoot and on horseback, for miles around. Within a few days of his arrival he had found time to journey inland, from the coast toward the mountain range, where amid vast forests of pine and redwoods, would oft-times appear great sterile ridges of rock. Here and there he would find sylvan openings, wonderfully inviting to the rider or pedestrian in their coolness and shadow. Occasionally, leaving the main road, he would take one of the trails into the forest, only to invariably come upon denuded branches and stumps of pines and cedars. Sometimes freshly cut logs, still wet and resinous, betokened the near-by presence of the lumbermen who had already commenced to invade this region. On one of these excursions, soon after his arrival, he discovered in the depths of a great forest of redwood, a sawmill in full operation. Long before he came upon it, he located it by the whirr of the machinery and the clanking of the chains of the skids of sawn planks in the river on whose banks it was built. The mill itself was a rude shell of boards and beams, which trembled under a weight of machinery and lumber.

On the day of his chance visit to the mill it so happened that the two proprietors of the concern were both standing by the river watching the lumbermen drive the logs as he approached. Mutual introductions followed, and he found that he had thus strangely made the acquaintance of a big-hearted, voluble Irishman called

by all "Jim" Ryan, and his partner—a quiet reticent Canadian by the name of John Benedict.

Burton found himself drawn toward both of these men from the very first meeting. Ryan was an impulsive, warm-hearted Irishman, ready of wit and possessing all the characteristics of the true Celt. Benedict, on the other hand, was almost the complete antithesis of his business associate. Of a cast of countenance almost somber in its character, his reticence and reserve made him exceedingly difficult of approach. At the time of his meeting with Burton he was probably about forty years of age. With a total absence of anything about him savoring of ostentation, there was an air of nobility and gentleness about him that was wonderfully attractive. One very noticeable characteristic was that, know him as long as you would, he never made any reference to his past. As to it, he never at any time invited confidences. To some he had always the air of a man who was living under a cloud of some sort, or who was carrying a burden which at times was more than he could bear. From the moment of their first meeting, Burton made up his mind that, so far as it was in his power, he would get acquainted with the man. And, with the exception of the genial Irishman, Ryan, Benedict was the only one among all his acquaintances at his new post whom he cared particularly to cultivate.

From the very beginning the dull monotony of his life at Fort Humboldt was to Burton productive of deep and unwonted depression. He cared nothing for the sea and its penetrating breezes chilled him in the early morning when the southwesters blew. Almost every

morning the outlying fog would roll into the bay to remain until driven away by the afternoon trades. Often Burton would go, as he had this day, to the promontory near the beach, which opened up such a splendid prospect of the great sea beyond. Its perfect isolation was its great attraction to the young soldier. The mountains behind seemed connected with his past, the sea to the west looked into the future. They were all deep symbols to him. Here he could turn his back, if he chose, upon those snow-capped mountains that seemed at times so hard and cold, and lulled by the distant beating of the surf, the lonely cry of the plover, the drowsy chain of alternative breaths of cool winds, would sit silent and alone for hours at a time. Often there would come a singular calm when the trades blew gently and scarcely broke the crest of the long Pacific swell that leisurely rose and fell on the beach. He loved to lie at his ease upon the sweet-scented, soft beach grass that grew abundantly upon the promontory, and there indulge in day-dreams of the future years. No opiate could ever have had the same narcotic influence that these surroundings had upon the homesick and lonely soul of the exiled soldier. Seagulls and pelicans flew over the water. When the leaves of the trees bent before the northwest winds thy had a colorless brilliancy and the manzanita plants gave out a slight aroma in the heat of the day.

Sometimes he would sit there until the moon rose, swinging low over the snowy ridge beyond. Then would come quaint odors in the still night air and a strong incense from the forest was wafted to him and breathed

a strange exhalation into his nostrils which produced revery deep and profound. Then it was that the past would appear in review before him. Later when the mild California winter set in, he would be compelled to spend his evenings in his quarters. There in a comfortless room with a rag carpeting on the floor, and no rugs to soften the hearthstone backed with burning logs, he would sit down before the fireplace and watch the flames galloping up the chimney. At such times he would go to a trunk in the corner, and opening the lid, would take out a package of letters. These he would open and read, and in reading them he seemed to lose consciousness of all else. Then the troubles of the day would be forgotten with the sternness and the injustice of the harsh commandant, that had been his lot to endure for some time past. At such times he had little foreboding of the tragedy that was even then close at hand. Then he would forget that he was in that desolate room, lighted only by the firelight, and would imagine himself once more back at "Indian Rock" with the one he loved.

When he had finished reading the letters, he would sit long looking into the fire, plunged in deep thought. The hours would pass and he would scarcely move, save to replenish the fire, which had in the meantime burned low, and then through the mists of months of absence, over the space of the continent would come the image of the young mistress of Vaucluse. Such habits as these served to emphasize in his own mind the isolation of his present lot. The strongest nature might well have been influenced by such a situation. Separated from the woman he loved, enervated by a climate that did not

agree with him, consigned to a post of duty which was virtually sending him into exile, it is little wonder that he found himself subject to long spells of depression from which he found great difficulty in freeing himself. He was indeed a fit subject for those passions and appetites which await our moments of weakness, and then seek to obtain the mastery of man's moral nature, and thus ultimately make of him a moral if not a physical wreck. There had been many causes at work which might have given plausible ground for the belief that life in this frontier post, would destroy the moral fiber of a man of his peculiarly sensitive temperament.

First and foremost, he had incurred the undeserved enmity of the commandant of the post, Lieutenant-Colonel Benton, a martinet of martinets. Nothing that he did seemed to please that irascible individual, and he had succeeded in making Fort Humboldt a mild sort of "Hades" for this young subaltern. Then, from time to time, in the endeavor to increase his small savings and to hasten the happy day when he could claim his bride, he had made sundry business ventures, all of which had resulted disastrously and had left him deeply in debt. Then came illness and this, coupled with recurring fits of homesickness, brought on a habit to which up to this time he had been a stranger—that of occasionally imbibing very lightly of strong liquors. He had inherited no such tastes, and this weakness under other circumstances, would have been entirely foreign to his nature and character. As a matter of fact, it was far less so than in the case of most of his brother officers. But with his peculiar physical organization, a little in his

case had all the effect of excessive indulgence in others. In any event, his weakness, such as it was, was not lost upon Captain Carl Brett, who had been exiled to this forlorn post at the same time that Burton had received his own orders to take up his duties there.

CHAPTER XVIII

"EVERY MAN HAS HIS PRICE"

CARL BRETT was neither by nature or choice a man without principles. All the traditions of the distinguished family to which he belonged were against the doing of a mean and dishonorable act. At West Point and in the army he was regarded as the soul of honor. He was so impeccable in all that stood for honor and knightliness of character, that hitherto in his career he had never been suspected of even harboring feelings which would not have done honor to those who were most punctilious in such respects. But at heart he was thoroughly selfish in all that concerned the attainment of any desire on which he had really set his mind. As a boy he had been in love with Sallie Custis, and in his manhood he determined that nothing should prevent her being his. On the surface, everything seemed to favor his suit. Both her family and his own looked with entire favor upon the union as a thing greatly to be desired. As for the girl herself, she had always been fond of him, having made of him a sort of childhood hero. As they grew older the feeling bade fair to ripen into something warmer. In fact, everything worked in Brett's favor

until the advent of Burton on the scene of action. Even that worried Brett but little, until his defeat in the riding contest at West Point convinced him that in the person of his Academy classmate and brother officer he had a dangerous rival. Then came the Mexican War, which, while it brought higher promotion to Brett, yet produced the greater real honors for Burton. In the hero of the famous ride at Monterey and the mounting of the howitzer on San Cosmos Church, was personified far more to catch a young girl's fancy, than the mere winning of a captain's commission. Long before the regiment to which they both were attached had been ordered to California, Brett had seen clearly that he was destined to lose the girl of his choice, unless something unexpected and totally unlooked for should arise, which should cause her to break off a relationship, which had grown suspiciously close. All the way on the long voyage to California, Brett brooded over the matter, with the result that when Fort Humboldt was reached, he had formed a fairly well-developed plan to rid himself for good of the dangerous rivalry of his former classmate. Not since the close of their life at West Point had the two young men been on terms of intimacy.

Ever since Burton's last visit to Maysville and Brett's subsequent visit to Sallie Custis' home at Vaucluse, the relations between the two classmates had become very much strained, if not openly inimical. Not that anything that Burton had done had been responsible for it. It arose solely through his rival's standing in the way of what Brett wanted most in the world, and that hot-headed young Southerner was not of a kind to

brook opposition of any sort wherein he was vitally concerned. Nor was it that Brett was naturally of a vindictive disposition. But he loved Sallie Custis with all the power of a selfish nature, and would have gone through fire and water to win her. He alone of all others had good reason to suspect the existence of an understanding between the woman he loved and his brother officer at the post. He had pleaded his own suit on that last visit to Vaucluse and Sallie Custis had admitted that there was another "Richmond" in the field, whom some day, if all went well, she would marry. She did not mention Burton's name, but ever since the day of the tournament at the West Point Academy, a lover's instinct had told Brett only too clearly who was his most dangerous rival.

So from the day that Brett first heard of Burton's occasional indulgence in liquor, and its extraordinary effect on him, the former's mind had dwelt upon the subject with an avowedly sinister motive. He knew full well the commanding officer's curious dislike of Burton, and he felt sure that all that was needed to insure Burton's disgrace and forced resignation from the army was to have him reported drunk while on duty, to Colonel Benton. That hot-headed disciplinarian could be trusted to do the rest. Knowing Burton's popularity with all the officers and the men at the post, he knew that if the matter was reported at all, it must be done by one whom selfish interest prompted to do the act. His better self revolted at the meanness of the act, but his jealousy and desire to attain his ends overpowered in his heart every other consideration. He determined to do

it, and the plan did credit to his discernment of Burton's character.

It was this: To get Burton in a condition so that he could be reported drunk when on duty with his company and then to get the officer of the day to so report him. Then, he reasoned, that when Burton was called up before the commandant of the post, and threatened with a court-martial, he would more than likely at once tender his resignation. This, with its acceptance, would undoubtedly ruin him, in so far as Sallie Custis was concerned. "Burton can make good only in the army," was his thought, "and he will surely fail in civil life. He is so incapable of dissimulation that he will write to Sallie Custis at once and tell her the truth—*in so far as he knows it.*"

To both Brett and Burton the prospect of being shut up together in a desolate army post was equally disagreeable. In the mind of one, at least, was the conviction that it should not long continue, unless the plans which he even then formed should grievously miscarry. The regiment had not been at Fort Humboldt many months before these plans were carried into partial execution. It occurred in this wise: Among the officers stationed at the four-company post that bore the name of Fort Humboldt was a certain Lieutenant Cass, who occupied the position of First Lieutenant in Burton's own company. He was an inordinately ambitious personage, fond of gambling and known as a man of but little principle. Brett had early fixed his eye upon him as being in all probability the most pliant tool for the accomplishment of his own ends.

Before coming out openly and accosting Cass on the subject, he made certain of two things: One that the latter's heart was set on having a captaincy and the other was that his gambling habits had involved him seriously in debt. So, with this knowledge, Brett made up his mind to risk opening up to him a part at least of what was in his mind.

That night an interview of a most private nature took place between Captain Brett and Lieutenant Cass in the quarters of the former, to which the subaltern officer had been most unexpectedly invited, on the pretext of sampling some particularly good crab-apple brandy which had been received from San Francisco a few days before. Owing to Cass' infelicitous reputation, he seldom found himself the recipient of any such marked social attentions. In the course of the conversation which ensued Brett said, in an indifferent tone of voice:

"Cass, don't you think it is a disgrace to the regiment to have an officer in it who makes such a beast of himself as does Burton?"

Cass looked the surprise he felt, and said: "It is not quite as bad as that, is it?"

"Yes, and it is getting worse. If the real facts ever get to the ear of Colonel Benton, that will be the end of Burton's usefulness in the army. Now, I will tell you frankly, Cass, that I have no love for Burton, and I propose, for the good of the service, to get rid of him. The reason for my harboring such feelings against a brother officer is no concern of yours. It has always been one of my beliefs that every man has his price. The consideration may not always be gold, and yet

there is some one thing that he holds sufficiently dear to be willing to barter his soul for it. Cass, there is no use of my mincing words with you! Burton stands in the way of my attaining something more precious to me than anything else in the world. To get him out of my way, I must force him out of the army under such circumstances that he will leave it under a cloud. Now I've told you my wants and I think I have guessed yours. You are next in line to Burton. If he drops out of the service you will get his captaincy. That's something you crave and crave badly. Another thing you not only want, but must have, is money enough to clear off your gambling debts and put you on your feet again. Now I will put you in the way of getting that captaincy, clearing off your debts and putting you on your feet financially, if you will do a little work for me that is just a trifle too low and cowardly for me to openly do myself. It is this:

"Several years ago when I was a cadet at West Point I learned that a thimbleful of strong liquor was sufficient to put Burton where he was in no condition for duty. It seemed to numb his senses and paralyze his brain. Now I happen to know that on several occasions of late he has been slightly under the influence of stimulants, which he has not touched since cadet days, on the occasion I referred to. Now, as you know, he is popular with all the officers at the fort, except the d—d martinet that commands here. If it was in their power, there isn't a man of them but would protect him under such circumstances even to the point of refusing to report him as drunk while on duty, if such a thing

should occur. Now I will see to it that he has an excellent opportunity to test the deadly qualities of this crab-apple brandy here, if you will do the rest. That is, I will attend to the trick of getting him 'under the influence' on some occasion when you will be acting as officer of the day, if you will report him drunk while on duty to old Benton. You are probably the only officer here at the 'Post' who could be 'induced' to do a thing like that. If you will do this, you will undoubtedly bring about his court-martial or resignation and thus get your captaincy. More than this, I will pay off your debts and give you a thousand dollars besides. Of course, it will make things pretty uncomfortable for you here, but I can soon fix that for you. I am going to send in my own resignation from the army soon and start home on a furlough pending its acceptance. Through my father, who, as you know, has great influence with the Secretary of War, I will get you transferred to duty with another regiment on the Atlantic coast, and then you will get rid of all that unpleasantness.

"There, Cass, you have the whole damnable conspiracy laid bare before you. Don't delude yourself for a moment with the thought that I do not appreciate the contemptible meanness of it all. Nobody but a black-hearted scoundrel would conceive such a plan and none but a cur would carry it out. Yet I expect to be paid my price, and I have offered you yours. Will you accept it?"

As Brett finished, he coolly lighted a cigar and with an expression of cynical contempt on his face waited

for his companion's reply. The latter—hardened *roué* and gambler though he was—blushed crimson at his fellow officer's brutally frank statement, and did not answer at once. Finally he spoke in a husky voice which betokened either deep emotion or a surplus of crab-apple brandy. It was probably a mixture of both.

"Brett, with all these debts of mine staring me in the face, I had already made up my mind to sell myself to the devil in order to get rid of them. Under the circumstances, I think you will make an excellent substitute. It is now with me simply a question whether I take the government's money or yours. On the whole, I think it will go easier with me if I take yours. So we'll call it a bargain."

"Very well, then," said Brett, apparently unmoved, "any time that you deliver the goods, I am ready to pay the price."

CHAPTER XIX

THE RESIGNATION

As Burton was sauntering in the direction of the parade ground, one chill March morning, he heard some one speak his name. Looking up, to his surprise, he saw that it was Brett, who beckoned him to his quarters on the side of the road, opposite to that where Burton was walking. On stepping across the roadway, his former classmate accosted him in this wise:

"Burton, I just wanted to let you know that I have handed in my resignation, and that I start next week for Virginia."

The visitor was indeed surprised at this unexpected news, and could not refrain from inquiring as to what had led up to this step.

"Well, father wants me to come home and go into politics, and so I have decided to drop back into civil life."

This led to some further desultory conversation, which finally ended in a reminiscent vein, largely commemorative of their West Point days. As Burton rose to go, on the plea that it was about time for company drill, Brett said: "Before you leave we must drink a glass together to the memory of West Point days."

Under the spell of thoughts of Academy days, Burton was induced to drink a glass of the very brandy which had figured so largely in the recent confab participated in by Lieutenant Cass and Captain Brett. And thus in the name of their common Alma Mater, was the victim of the plot betrayed.

"And now, Burton, one more glass to our mutual success, you in the army, and I in citizen's clothes." This, too, was drunk, and then Burton departed to perform his duties on the company drill ground. An hour later it was noised around the camp that Lieutenant Cass, as officer of the day, had reported Captain Burton to Colonel Benton as having been drunk while in the performance of his duties as an officer of the United States army. The whole post was dumfounded at the news. Thus to learn that such an exemplary officer as Burton had always been, should have been guilty of such a breach of military discipline as this, and even more, that a brother officer could have been found who could not have devised some legitimate way of avoiding such a serious step. Officers had not infrequently been found in that condition on other occasions, and means had invariably been invented of keeping the fact from the knowledge of the rigid martinet who ruled the post. As the facts became known, a deep-seated suspicion was aroused, in more than one quarter, that a job had been put up on Burton, to which Cass, for wholly selfish reasons, had been at least a willing instrument. But none went so far, not even the victim himself, as to suspect that the high-minded Carl Brett had any hand in the plot, if such it was.

Immediately after the matter was presented to him, Colonel Benton had ordered Burton to his own quarters, to remain there under arrest until further order. Later in the day he sent an orderly to the disgraced officer, directing him to report at once at headquarters. The matter had been arranged so cleverly, and the offense was so public, that it would have been no easy task for even a complaisant commandant to have smoothed the affair over without a court-martial, and in this case, he was far from desiring to do so. When Burton, in obedience to the message, appeared before his commanding officer, the latter was anything but sparing of the feelings of the subordinate. In fact, an avowed enemy could not have been more brutal in his manner and words.

"Captain Burton, you are reported by the officer of the day to have been drunk while on duty to-day. Under the regulations of the army, I have no other alternative than to order a court-martial upon your case. There is, however, a way for you to avoid this public disgrace, which can only result in your dishonorable dismissal from the army, and that is for you to tender your resignation now and here. I have received information from sources, which, though private, I believe to be trustworthy, that this is not your first offense of this kind. Were it not for your exceptionally fine record, sir, in the Mexican War, I would refuse to recommend the acceptance of your resignation and would let the court-martial take its course. I feel it my duty to assure you, for the good of the service, that the army is no place for men of your stamp. We want gentlemen

here, not sots. You have lived on the strength of that Mexican War record of yours long enough. The time has come for you to step down and out. You had better go back to the farm, from which I understand you came. The country has no place for such as you in its service. The nation wants men of self-control, those who can control themselves as well as others. My advice to you is to reform at once, and then resign."

While the cruel cutting words of the old martinet were being uttered, the clear gray eyes of the young soldier never faltered in their gaze upon those of the commandant. There was a glitter in them, a look of indomitable will power which even his intimates only saw there on rare occasions, but which all knew to indicate the possession of an iron will and unswerving purpose.

"Colonel," he said, in a low but clear voice, "it is possible for a soldier to do his full duty without insulting, in so doing, a brother officer. There are many things about this unfortunate affair, which if explained to you might go toward mitigating the apparent seriousness of my offense. But I ask for no opportunity at your hands, or that of any one else, to explain my conduct. My resignation will be duly tendered to you during the course of the day. Is that all, sir?"

"Yes, you may return to your quarters."

Then without another word being spoken, he returned to his quarters in disgrace. As far as human wisdom could foretell, the military career of Samuel Burton was closed for all time.

CHAPTER XX

THE AFTERMATH

Burton's head never touched his pillow the night following his interview with the commandant at Fort Humboldt. What his thoughts were during his long vigil can easily be conjectured. They were centered on one between whom and himself had now fallen a shadow full of ill portent. What would Sallie Custis say, when she heard that the one to whom she had given her trust and love, had fallen short of that ideal which she had placed before him? The words that she had spoken to him that last afternoon at Indian Rock were ringing all night long in his ears. "Be worthy of my trust and all will be well." And now, in an unguarded moment, through events which he could not yet explain, it must appear on the surface that he had been recreant to that trust. Oh, if a continent did not separate them at that moment? If he could only take her once more in his arms and there, heart to heart, explain to her by word of mouth just why he was not the sottish creature the world would have her think. But whatever explanations, if they were to be made at all, must be written ones. And so, long after midnight, he filled out his resignation, as he

had promised to Colonel Benton, and then set himself to the harder task of penning this letter:

"DEAREST: No man ever set himself a harder task than the one that confronts me at this moment. It is not easy to publish to the world one's disgrace, but a thousand times harder is it to tell the one we love best in all the world, that we have done anything that is unworthy of the love that is given in return. And yet, that is what has fallen to my lot. You are entitled to the whole truth, without palliation or concealment. It is this: Yesterday I was intoxicated while in the performance of my duty as an officer and a soldier. I was ordered by my commanding officer, to whom the matter was reported, to either stand a court-martial or resign. I have handed in my resignation and its acceptance has been recommended by Colonel Benton, the commander of this post. It will be some months probably before it can go through the regular channels and be returned here with the approval of the Secretary of War, but it will surely come, and then I will be adrift in the world, without a profession and under the necessity of starting life anew, I know not where. No one realizes better than I the depth of the disgrace of this deplorable affair, nor the sorrow with which you will read these lines. I do not believe in extenuation or excuses. It happened and I alone am the responsible party. It might easily have been hushed up and kept from the world, and yet it was not. Even then it would not have relieved me from responsibility. You have given me your trust as well as your love, and I have proved myself in this one

case unworthy of it. All I can do, is to make the same plea, which the prisoner at the bar often makes, after his first offense, 'Give me another chance to prove that I am a man and can control my appetites.' As God is my witness, I shall never fail again, and with His help I will live down this disgrace, and compel the world's respect once more. I will go to a new field and there work with all the strength of purpose that is in me to win success in a new field. Will you give me that chance and will you wait until I have achieved a position to which I can invite you to come and share with me? I never loved you more than I do at this moment, and—in all truth—I was never more worthy of your trust than in this hour of darkness. What shall it be, a life together or estrangement? It is for you to say which.

"Tenderly and lovingly yours,

"Sam'l Burton."

The following morning the letter of resignation and the one addressed to the woman of his choice, were both dispatched to their respective destinations.

Then followed four months of weary waiting until his resignation could be forwarded to Washington and accepted by the Secretary of War. During this painful period Burton was fairly embarrassed by the kindly attention of his brother officers, who sought to show by unstinted acts of kindness to him and openly expressed contempt of Cass, their own opinion of the little tragedy that had been played before their eyes. As for Brett, he was soon to escape the irksomeness of his present position at the fort by an early departure for San

Francisco on a leave of absence, which was to terminate, as all now knew, in his return to civil life. "Jim" Ryan and his silent partner, Benedict, too, took the occasion of Burton's temporary disgrace to display in every possible way, not only their contempt for the "bloody tyrant" (as the Irishman expressed it) who had forced his resignation, but their loyal trust and confidence in the man who had suffered at his hands. Ryan's Kentucky thoroughbred, "Eclipse," was at all times at Burton's disposal, and many were the rides he had through the country for miles around on that worthily famed steed. Many, too, were the pleasant and profitable conversations had during this period between the disgraced officer and the Canadian, Benedict. In the latter Burton found not only an interesting, but a wonderfully attractive and winning personality.

At the end of four months, word was received that the resignation had been accepted and that Burton was once again a civilian, without a profession or a calling. And all this time no word came from Virginia. Unless it came soon, he would be compelled to leave for San Francisco without knowledge as to what her answer would be to his own message. At last, wearied with waiting, and feeling that he could not bear to remain longer at the fort—now that he had severed all relations with the army—he arranged to leave for San Francisco on the next boat. Before doing so, he obtained a promise from Benedict that should any letter arrive for him in the meantime, the latter would bring it to him on his own promised visit to that place, which was to occur

a month later. So, promising to send his address as soon as he had located himself in San Francisco, he bade a sad farewell to the friends at the post, which had been the scene of the most unhappy epoch of his life.

CHAPTER XXI

IN THE SHADOWS

THE scene now shifts to a cheerless, uncarpeted room in the loft of a sailors' boarding-house in San Francisco. It has one occupant—a man clothed in the garb of an army officer. A close inspection would have revealed the features of Samuel Burton, late Captain in the United States Army. He had now been a month in the famed city of the "Golden Gate," and it had brought to him only fresh disappointment and humiliation. He had expected to find friends in San Francisco from whom he could borrow sufficient funds with which to defray not only his necessary living expenses, but the heavy cost of the long journey to the Atlantic coast as well. Too proud to make known to any of his friends at "Humboldt" his straitened financial condition, he had left there without giving them an inkling of the fact that save the month's pay which he received the day before he left the fort, he had not a cent to his name. Knowing full well that he would have to husband his resources well until he could get assistance from friends, he had soon after his arrival in "Frisco" taken quarters in a cheap hotel, known as the "What Cheer House,"

where he was located at the time this chapter opens. Until the receipt by Benedict, some two weeks after his departure, of his promised letter—giving his address in San Francisco as that ill-favored hostelry—no one suspected that he was all but penniless. But the moment Benedict informed Ryan of the location of their friend, the impulsive Irishman exclaimed, "Bedad, I know that 'j'int' and a bad one it is, too. Seeing the lad is in trouble, it's up to us to see that he has help and that soon, too." So it was agreed between them that Benedict should hasten his proposed visit to San Francisco a little, in order to relieve as promptly as possible the necessities of a man whom they knew was too proud to ask their help.

Just before Benedict departed, a letter arrived for Burton, which bore the postmark "Vaucluse, Va." This he, of course, took with him. On his arrival at San Francisco at dusk, Benedict went at once to the Palace Hotel, preferring to announce his coming by sending a messenger on ahead to the "What Cheer House" with the letter and a note accompanying it, announcing the writer's arrival and promising to call later in the evening.

The messenger arrived during Burton's brief absence for supper, and he found the letter and note both awaiting his return. He hastily tore the letter open, and this is what he read:

"I have just read and reread, with a heart that is as heavy as lead, the story of your forced retirement from the army. It is all so sudden and terrible that it has

affected me beyond power to express. My faith in you, which was once so great, is now all but dead. Why was it to be that one whom I always thought so strong and self-reliant should be found so wanting? From the moment that we first met until now you have always been a real help to me. In watching you, I grew strong in my faith in your honor. In the days that are past I learned to trust you as I have trusted no one else in this world, and I dreaded the future at times, lest I might not find in you all that I had hoped. But time only strengthened my faith and it has never left me until now. I read to-day from your own pen the full story of your disgrace at Fort Humboldt. That faith which had been so strong within me all these years grew weak and faded away, never, I fear, to return. All that I asked of you was strength and perfect fidelity to the trust that was given you, whether it was great or small. No man who has been as weak as you, or been recreant to his duty, can have my full respect. As you have in times past given me much of the greatest happiness I have ever known, so now this disappointment in you brings me the bitterest sorrow that it has ever been my lot to know. I expected so much, and now that expectation is gone forever. God may forgive you the weakness and unfaithfulness and I pray that in future years I may learn to forgive much that now seems impossible of forgiveness. If you will but learn, during the days to come, to rise from the stepping-stones of your dead self to the better things, you may in this way retrieve the past by means of the future. The former is gone, and suffice it to say, that we cannot forget it

entirely. As for the future, in parting I say in all sincerity 'God bless you.'

"Somehow to-night my mind goes back to that September afternoon when I first met you at your uncle's house, in Maysville. You seemed so lonely and friendless that day that somehow my heart went out to you in pity, if not in sympathy. In those days you were little more than a boy, and I but a young girl, and yet in many ways I seemed much older than you. During those beautiful fall days that I spent at Maysville I saw so much of you and you showed to me a side of your character that you managed to keep from all others. Girl though I was, I saw in you a gentleness coupled with a strength of purpose that told me that some day, if the way should open, you would attain things that most people thought far beyond your reach. So, with more faith in you, perhaps, than you had in yourself, I told you much of my friends and of the world of which I myself knew but little and you nothing, in the hope that some day you might reach out and grasp those things that seemed so far away.

"Then I went back to my Virginia home, and in doing so I went, apparently, out of your sight, but it was not to be so. You found yourself when I was too far away to be of any help, and the next I heard of you was that you had entered West Point. When this news came to me in a letter written by your cousin, I was made proud and happy over it, and the old faith in you, which was once so strong, came back. You can never know how proud of you I was during those commencement days at West Point. You had grown so and it seemed that I

had even a part in that. Then came those days of skill in the riding academy when you vanquished all others. I was so proud and happy that day, though your victory meant the defeat of my life-long playmate and friend. Then came that never-to-be-forgotten walk and talk the night of the Commencement ball, when you seemed to come so close to me. As I recall the hours that we spent together at Vaucluse and West Point, there does not come to me a single marring incident. At Cabin John's Bridge I learned the strength of your love and my heart even then did not wholly refuse to listen, but distrustful of myself, not you, I sent you away without the promise that you asked of me. Then came those dreadful yet stirring days of the Mexican War, when your letters came telling me of your hours of peril while fighting our country's battles on foreign soil. After every battle I trembled and waited lest your name should be among the slain, and when the good news would come, coupled with some word of recommendation for your conduct in the battle, I was proud of my soldier boy in Mexico.

"And then, when the war was over and you came back to me and asked me for my love, I gave it freely and unreservedly. To me you have been, in the past, all that is noble, pure and good. I had learned to love you as a girl should one to whom she is to intrust her life's happiness. Was it not so? That blessed day at Indian Rock, when I sent you away with the answer you asked for, there came over me a great wave of yearning and loneliness of which you never knew. I wanted you so, and yet I had bidden you go. In the lonely hours of

the night which followed I stretched out my arms to you in my loneliness, just for a touch of your hand in mine, and the years before me came like a cloud to my eyes. Then I prayed, as I had never prayed before, and peace and rest came with the knowledge that I had your love for all time to come. For I knew then a love that does not change with time and the passage of years. I went to sleep that night with your name on my lips. I am truly glad that I have known you. It is one of the best blessings that has ever come into my life. And if in the face of the evil days that have now come upon us, it is necessary for us both to suffer, it will not be without its benefits. In the days gone by, you were to me so manly and good and true, that you were to me a king among men. You must always remember that, whether I will or not, I shall think of you often in the long days to come. There are so many ways that you have helped me, unconsciously perhaps—so many that I cannot tell of them here—and I have sometimes been lost in wonder, that you, who have been with me so little, have helped and influenced my life so much. I think I have always been happy and sunny-hearted, but since I have known you I have loved people more, been more just and fair to others, and there is a new sympathy in my heart for those who suffer, for those who fail in life because the burden is too great. Before I knew you I used to shrink away from people who were maimed or deformed, or even simply common, and now instead of the old horror I find myself longing to reach out and help some one, to take up those broken lives of men and heal them. And why is this? It is because I have learned to know

what love is. It is great and wonderful. When people love it is because of the great joy in their heart that is reaching out and touching their lives.

"And now your path and mine must separate, perhaps never to meet again. If in the years to come, I am able to bring happiness to others, it will be because I have been on the mountain tops and have seen the ideals as well as the realities of life. I had a dream a few nights ago, the memory of which still clings to me so that I cannot throw it off. I dreamed that I was climbing up a long and steep mountain side, made up of great uneven steps. I was very tired, and though I had climbed for so long, there was still a great distance to go before I reached the top. I turned and looked backward down the slope, and saw you struggling up the steep pathway, weary with the journey, yet with your face illumined with longing for the summit. I was overwhelmed by a great yearning to go to you, for I realized that I cared for you more than I ever dared confess. But when I started downward there was a great rock in my path, and I saw that my path was blocked and that I could not reach you, and then I awoke.

"And now, that your letter has been received I grasp the full meaning of that dream. A great and impassable barrier has been placed between us by your own hand. Instead of taking up life together, we must now commence one that will be forever apart. As you go your way, and I go mine, again I say it, though my heart be sore with the sorrow of it all, 'God bless and

keep you in the days to come.' I can never forget the past, but I can forgive the injury that you have done us both. Good-by, not for this time, but for all time.

"SALLIE."

CHAPTER XXII

THE MAN WHO FAILED

Only he who has passed through the vale of shadows himself, can appreciate the feelings that possessed the soul of Samuel Burton, from the moment when, in his dire extremity, he crossed for the first time the uninviting portals of the "What Cheer House." At one time it had been a respectable commercial house, but had gradually lost its hold on the traveling public, until now it made but little pretension to be other than a sailor's boarding-house.

No one who has not been "down on his luck," can comprehend the humiliation of the ex-officer of the United States army as he entered the uninviting portals of this wretched hostelry. Disgraced in the eyes of the world, condemned by those of his fellow officers who did not know the truth, separated from the woman he loved, friendless, penniless, and alone, he truly was an object of pity.

When he had asked for a room, he was ushered into a dimly lighted apartment on the third story of the building. All that it contained in the way of furniture was a bed, a chair and a broken washstand. Amid such surroundings as these he sat on the night the messenger

brought him Benedict's letter, inclosing the one from Vaucluse. With the open letter spread out before him, he sat alone with his thoughts. He had arrived at one of those dramatic crises in his journey, when all the tragedy and pathos of life seemed to be present. He pondered long over the past, which carried in its safe bosom so many blessed memories. Only a few months before and the future seemed so bright and full of promise. Now how changed it all was! He knew full well what a cynical world would say of him. Already he saw written in no uncertain characters the word "failure" after his name. "There goes a man," it would say, "whose future is behind him." Then would come thoughts of all those who had in the past believed in him and had hoped so much from him. He called to mind the name of each in turn. The mother and father so far away, at that very moment on the Ohio farm; his uncle, Tom Carter; dear Professor Dolbier, his classmates at the Point, all those who had been his comrades in the Mexican War. Was it true that back of him lay the dreadful tragedy of a life that seemed to him worse than wasted? Gnawing thoughts came to harrow his inmost soul. Self-examination more dreadful than that of the Inquisition told him that the second great crisis of his life had come. In comparison with the first, the latter paled before it into insignificance. He had faced many emergencies, but none so fraught with moment to himself as this. Alone and unaided, he must summon all the manhood within him to meet the crisis before him. Was he a dreamer? Was he a man who was destined always to be planning some great work and never

accomplishing it? Was the character that had been forming during all these years of earnest striving for better things, to fail him in his hour of need? Was he to be shipwrecked in this storm that had broken out of summer skies, condemned to float like some mute derelict until, chilled with adversity's numbing touch, he should perish on the bleak coast of grim despair? Was there nowhere an avenue of escape from it all? Were the gates of hope to be shut in his face? It seemed so, for to-night everything appeared to speak only of desolation and death.

The high night wind without shook the window-panes of the forlorn boarding-house wherein he sat, and that sound for him was the sound of despair. Never had the Infinite and Eternity seemed so close to him as now. He went to the window and looked out at the clouds scudding before the moon beneath the fierce night wind. Below him lay the life of the city and from the harbor beyond came a rising mist. He glanced at the dark waters of the "Bay" and the thought came to him, that there, at least, was a safe refuge for human derelicts. Hour after hour he sat looking out upon the deserted street below. It seemed to him, that night, symbolic of his own life. The whole of it could be seen at a glance. The heavy mists, the leaden skies, the low clouds, all were in keeping with his somber mood. He was an intense man that night, one who felt and saw. Here he was at last friendless, an outcast, solitary, reading, as it were, his own obituary carved on the stone-work of his brief career, in the word "failure." It was this word seared into his brain which held him spell-

bound to-night. And why should he fail? Was there not left to him the will-power and the strength to do whatever the future might have in store for him? A man's destiny is in his own keeping, the opportunity in God's. And while he struggled, face to face with this destiny of his, there came to his ear from out of the unknown a whisper of the joy of living. It awoke that all-persuasive thing we call the love of life. Once more the humanity within him spoke out appealingly. Something from within told him that sooner or later, it might be years perhaps, but some day, he would find himself. And as he sat there, with sunken eyes and haggard face, drawn tense with the violence of the struggle, there came a knock at the door.

Without rising from the bed on which he sat, he said "Come in." A visitor entered. He glanced up, to see before him the Canadian—Benedict. The latter approached and extended his hand. Burton grasped it, and seating himself on the bed once more, offered the chair to the newcomer. For a moment there was an embarrassed silence, which Benedict was the first to break.

"Captain Burton," he said, "I had a feeling as I walked over here from my hotel that you might be in need of a friend to-night as you have never needed one before or ever will again. This is my excuse for intruding on you at this late hour. It is not necessary that I should know your thoughts in order to be of service to you at this time. All I know or care to know is that you are temporarily down on your luck, and that you need a helping hand. I have had troubles

myself, and of a sort that you will never be called upon to bear. For this reason, and because I am the older man, I may perhaps be able to say to you the right word at this time—one that I hope may start you on the upward track once more. You are not a trifler, and judging from those heavy-set lips of yours, you are anything but a quitter. My firm belief is that to every man comes his chance in this world, sooner or later. He may not see it, he may not grasp it or care for it, yet it comes. And so, my friend, I want to express my belief to you to-night that your great opportunity is still before you—that the world yet holds for you honors of which you have never dreamed. Try to forget the past, and remember that time is a wonderful healer and brings with it respites from every wound. What you need most is to get away from your present surroundings. Get back among your friends once more. To do this you will need funds, and I would deem it a privilege if you will let me act as your banker, for a while, until you can find it convenient to repay me. In other words, let me advance to you such sums as you may need to defray your expenses back to New York."

No one could have been more overcome at such unexpected kindness from a comparative stranger than Burton, and he could scarcely control himself, when he attempted to express his thanks for the loan, which he gratefully accepted. After a few moments' further conversation, the visitor excused himself and departed.

After he had gone, the young soldier sat for a long time again buried in deep thought. He pondered well over the words that had been spoken to him that night

by this ever-reticent and mysterious man, the Canadian Benedict. Who he was and where he came from, he knew not. And yet his words had brought to the surface all the latent manhood within him, and with it came hope and an infinite peace, such as he had not known for many a long day. A few moments ago it seemed an impossible task to reply to this last letter from Vaucluse, but now he had regained his poise and felt that he could write to Sallie Custis what was destined to be, as far as human wisdom could tell, the last letter that he should ever write her.

CHAPTER XXIII

ESTRANGEMENT

It was in thorough keeping with his own mood—these bare and desolate surroundings of the sailors' boarding-house, from which at that moment were being penned the words which would complete Burton's estrangement from the woman he loved. Only circumstances of a most extraordinary kind could wring from this reticent, self-controlled man, such words as were forced that night from him out of the agony of a bruised and wounded heart. It told plainer than words the travail of the soul, and this was what he wrote:

"There is neither anger nor resentment in my heart at what you wrote when, in your own way, you told me that you could never give your hand in marriage to one who could not master himself. Those words of yours destroyed all hope of fulfilment of what was my devout wish—that some day I might call you wife. It takes a great deal to drive a man from his moorings and yet, if we only knew, a woman has it in her power to do so. You believe me weak, incapable alike of appreciation and trust. You think I am about to take the downward track which leads to failure, wretchedness and possible

death. I feel like one that has been led to some mountain top and shown the possessions of the world, and is told that they are his, if he will but keep the straight and narrow path that leads to the garden of Eden below. I started down that narrow path, but have fallen and no helping hand has been given me. I find myself wandering, bruised and lost, in some dark mountain recess far below. As I was about to drink of the cup of perfect happiness, it is snatched from my very lips, and I find myself suffering from a thirst that can never be quenched. The world may call me a failure, a derelict, and will perhaps buffet me like a bit of human driftwood on its great bosom. But sooner or later I will succeed. You will live to see me regain the respect of all and to realize that one false step cannot mar a man's success, if he but have the right stuff in him. The world will give me another chance, even though you would not. I will never marry. I gave you all there is. I have nothing of love to give another. The past you cannot take from me. I am better for having known you. In the days to come I shall be stronger and happier and gentler for having loved you. I grant fully that you have done what you believed to be right. I shall miss the blessedness of days spent with you by my side. I shall look in vain for the letters, for they will come no more. I shall have many a heartache as the anniversary of some day that is blest by having been associated in some way with you, rolls by and you are not present to share its joys with me. If I were the weak man you think me, I might write and tell you that you have wrecked my life. Instead, I tell you

that in a way you know not of, you have made it. For, with God's help, I shall rise on stepping-stones of my dead self to better, nobler things. So, standing to-night by the open grave of my dearest hope in life, I wish to say a parting word before it is closed forever. It is this: We may never meet again. Whether that be so or not, please remember this: That what I gave you of love in the years that are past can never be given to another. I can never love but once. I gave you all I had. My heart holds nothing of love which I could, if I would, offer to another. As it has been my hope in the past, it shall be my religion in the future. Wherever you may be, there my thoughts and prayers will follow you. You are my queen still. I can serve no other. God bless and keep you always safe from all harm."

Then signing and sealing the letter, he retired to pass another sleepless night.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE PASSING OF CASS

Pursuant to the promise he had made Benedict, the next day found Burton at the latter's room in the Palace Hotel. He stayed there nearly two hours, going over the situation with this friend of his necessity. As a result of it all, it was decided that Burton should depart on the boat sailing the next day and return to the east via Panama. To provide the necessary expenses of the trip, it was agreed that he should accept a loan from Benedict sufficient to get him comfortably to his old home in Ohio. More than this Burton would not accept, though urged strongly to do so.

The following day, on boarding the steamer *Golden Gate*, Burton found, to his surprise, that Captain Cass was to be one of his fellow passengers. It is needless to say that as soon as he saw Burton he carefully avoided him, showing that even he was not brazen enough to face willingly one whom he had so grievously injured. So it happened that the two men never met face to face until the boat had landed at Panama. The passengers had no sooner landed, preparatory to making their tedious overland journey to Aspinwall, on the Atlantic side of the Isthmus, than rumors became rife that yellow

fever and cholera were rampant. There was a thirty-mile ride to be made before the terminus of the railroad would be reached. This meant a long, tedious journey by mule, through dense chapparal and deep gorges, under alternate broiling sun and drenching rain. During this march malignant cholera broke out. Not only the women and children, but many of the men of the party fell ill with it. The mortality was dreadful. Burton—veteran soldier though he was—had been appalled at the ravages of this insidious foe. But, with a moral courage that gave little thought to his own personal safety, he had from the start assumed command of the party, and had succeeded in accomplishing much toward succoring the sick and protecting the well from infection. All willingly obeyed his commands, even though they had no authority back of them to enforce obedience. Each seemed to acquiesce naturally in the order of things, which placed on his shoulders the responsibility for their comfort and safety. Among the last to succumb to the disease was Captain Cass. From the start it was apparent that his case was a most severe one, and that it was only a question of a few hours before the reckless adventurer must himself die. His only attendant in his illness was the man whom he had so grievously injured only a few months before. As soon as he had learned that he had fallen a victim to the disease, Burton found time, though overwhelmed and utterly worn out with his self-imposed responsibilities, to assume personal care of him. He was only ill forty-eight hours. Burton was at his bedside the night he died. Shortly before he passed away, he motioned

him to his side. The latter leaned over him, to hear him whisper that he had something he must tell before he died. Burton urged him to postpone his story until he was stronger. But the stricken man knew he had only a short time to live.

"No, Burton," he said, "I have something to tell you before I take the plunge into the unknown. It concerns you and I must have your promise of forgiveness before it is too late. I started life wrong, Burton, but I want to end it right."

Then followed the story of the plot that had been hatched at the fort between Brett and the speaker. It was given even to its minutest details. In doing so Cass spared neither himself nor Brett in the telling. When he had finished, it was plain that his strength was going fast.

"Can you forgive me, Burton?" said the dying man.

"Willingly," came the response, which was accompanied by a gentle clasp of Cass's fever-wasted hand. "You were forced to it, Cass, largely by your necessities. The real sin rests not on your soul, but on the soul of another. It is Brett, not you, my poor fellow, who should seek forgiveness at my hands."

The next day there was a hasty burial, and all that was mortal of this "soldier of fortune" was laid to rest under the tangled vines and the bright flowers of the tropics.

Three months later found Burton once more on the farm where he had spent his boyhood days. It was not a cheerful home-coming, far different from the one that had preceded it. He found himself no longer the hero

that he was upon his return from the Mexican War. Even his father's greeting was constrained and half-hearted in its warmth. He had made but a poor attempt at concealing the disappointment and sorrow at the misfortune which had befallen the son who had heretofore been the source of so much pride. But in his mother he found no change. In weal or woe, she was always the same. If anything, there was an added tenderness and sympathy in her manner to him. Not a word of complaint did she utter. Only words of cheer, expressive of her abiding faith in his ultimate success. He only stayed a fortnight at home. He was unhappy there and eager to be among strangers who did not know of his past, and where he could work on even terms once more with his fellow man. He spent just one day at Maysville, en route to New York, where he had determined to go in an effort to collect some money which he had loaned a friend some years before, and which he needed sorely now, in this hour of his financial extremity. He had looked forward with anxiety, if not dread, to this visit, and yet he found in it unexpected comfort and strength. No one would have guessed for a moment from "Tom" Carter's greeting to his nephew that he was any less proud of him than on his memorable visit two years before. He had that pride of race which no misfortune could lessen or blot out. In sunshine or shadow, he was the same.

And as for Professor Dolbier, he treated him as if he had been his own son. Such treatment, after the sad and bitter experiences of the recent past, brought unbidden tears to the eyes of the younger man. It was

a source of real strength to know that there was still some one who had not lost faith in him. While at Maysville, Burton learned from his cousin Julia that Sallie Custis was to be married to Carl Brett at Washington during the coming Christmas holidays, now close at hand. He was not prepared for such news as this, and it came to him as another of those blows, which had fallen on him so often of late. He tried to discredit the truth of the announcement, and yet he knew that it must be true. It had been hard indeed to accustom himself to the thought that she was not to be his, but it was bitterness itself to think that she was soon to belong to the one who had deliberately wrought his ruin.

At times there would come to him a longing to go to her and tell her the truth about the man whose name she was about to take. He knew full well that were she to hear the story that had been told him by Cass on his deathbed, she would break with Brett forever. But that would not undo his own misstep, or would it give her back to him. No, what is to be, must be! The touch of fatalism in his nature spoke thus, and he determined to hold his peace. Some time, perhaps, she would know the truth, but now was not the hour or the occasion.

CHAPTER XXV

BRETT'S RETURN

"CARL, tell me the whole truth about the causes which led to Captain Burton's resignation from the army."

The speaker was Sallie Custis and the one addressed none other than Carl Brett, late captain in the United States army. The latter had been back in Virginia now nearly a year, and yet it was the first time that the fair daughter of Vaucluse had dared trust herself sufficiently to ask the one question that had been uppermost in her mind all these months. She had long since received the letter which Burton had written her from the "What Cheer House" in San Francisco, in which he had merely stated, in language wherein he had not sought to spare himself, the plain facts which had led to his resignation from the army. Still that explanation had never served to satisfy her. Woman-like, she refused to accept, even from the man she loved, an explanation which reflected so sadly on him. Intuitively she felt that the whole truth of the matter had not yet been revealed to her. Knowing that Brett knew full well the relations she had once sustained to his fellow-officer, she had hesitated long before venturing to ask

him for a version of the affair, which she knew he must have obtained from personal knowledge of the facts. She had known Carl Brett from childhood, and she never doubted for an instant but what he would tell her the literal truth about the whole sad affair. It was not from any misgivings on this score, that she had hesitated so long in asking him the question. It was only because of the constraint she felt in mentioning a name which hitherto—for obvious reasons—had never been mentioned between them. She knew full well that both of these men loved her, and her woman's heart in a way recoiled at asking, even in this indirect manner, that one should sit in judgment on the other. But she had made up her mind to have the story from Brett, and so the question had been asked and was now about to be answered. Brett knew that the question, sooner or later, would be asked and he had schooled himself for the arrival of that time. He had studied his part well, and with a view of meeting the question in such a way as to disarm criticism on her part. So he answered her in this wise:

"Burton was a good officer and there was general regret felt to have him leave the army as he did, under a cloud. His record in the Mexican War was fine, and there seemed to be no reason why his after-career should not have been equally creditable. The way the affair happened was this: There was a lieutenant in Burton's company by the name of Cass. He was a reckless, unprincipled sort of a chap, who would do most anything to accomplish his own ends. Knowing that Burton alone stood between him and promotion to the captaincy

of the company, he set about in a particularly cold-blooded sort of way, to force him out of the army. Burton, like most of the officers at the fort, was accustomed to occasionally take a little whisky to brace him up, on some of the cold, foggy days, that came with too great frequency at that cheerless post. In so doing, he was, of course, guilty of no breach of military rules and regulations. The only difference between him and the rest of us, was, that a very little liquor sufficed to put him off his balance.

"There was not an officer or enlisted man at that post who was so easily affected. Of course, this fact was known to Cass, as it was common knowledge among all the officers, who were stationed at Humboldt that year. It should have made him cautious about using it, but it seems to have been otherwise. For Cass succeeded one day in getting him loaded with apple brandy, just before he went on duty with his company, and then, as officer of the day, reported him to our colonel as drunk while in the performance of his duty. 'Old Bent,' as we called our commanding officer, was the worst martinet in the army, and instead of giving him a chance, as almost any other officer in his place would have done, gave him the choice of either resigning or standing court-martial. Burton chose, and probably wisely, to resign, for a court-martial could only have had but one result, and that was to publish to the army that he had been drunk while on duty. As it is, the story has been retailed already from post to post, until the facts have become common knowledge in every post, both east and west. Bad news, you know, travels faster than good every

time," remarked Brett, in a cynical tone, as he finished his narrative.

As Sallie Custis listened to the story from Brett's lips she realized how apparently hopeless was the secret wish of her heart, that Burton might some time again later enter the army, and redeem his tarnished name. But she knew how deep-rooted were the prejudices of the army in such matters, and she reluctantly admitted that should he do so, the odds would be much against him. Then, woman-like, feeling that her resentment must have some vent, she turned to Brett, and said: "Carl, who, in your opinion, was the real culprit in this case, the man who suffered the disgrace, or the cur who first tempted him, and then himself wrought his ruin?"

Seldom does it fall to the lot of a man to sit in judgment on himself, as it did that day to the proud young Virginian. He had already gone into the mire once, and his better self revolted against a second experience of that sort. In spite of himself, he found that he hesitated for words, and he would have given worlds to have escaped the ordeal. But the young woman by his side held him to it. "Carl, tell me what you think of a man who would do as Cass did to Captain Burton. Tell me the truth as you in your inmost soul conceive it to be." As Sallie Custis uttered these words, her eyes met Brett's in a look which seemed to read his innermost thoughts. Had he faltered even an instant longer, had he made a single false step at this moment, the girl at his side would have been lost to him forever. But in the stress of the emergency, his nerve came back to him, and he replied, in words that she re-

called with crushing distinctness in after-years: "The man who would do as Cass did is a cur, and if the truth were known, he would be ostracized forever after in the army."

"Carl, from this day Captain Burton's name is never to be mentioned again between us. It is needless for me to give my reasons for this. They are known to you. He belongs to my past. The chapter of my life, wherein he figured so largely, is to-day to be closed forever. But let me say just this one last word that you may never misunderstand my reason for never mentioning his name, or permitting you to mention it in my presence. You know that I gave him my perfect trust, and that he betrayed it. He has lost himself and me with it. He has been outwardly disgraced in the army and will doubtless find it difficult to live that disgrace down in any community wherein he may seek to redeem himself. And yet to me, he will always be as I knew him once, not as the world knows him now. It has seemed best to me, that you should tell me what you have, and I thank you for it. I wanted the assurance from your own lips, that you had no part, either in thought, word or deed, in the downfall of one who has been my very dear friend, and who has never had for you but the very kindest thoughts. I doubt not for a moment but that if you had been given the opportunity, you would have helped him in his trouble, and, if possible, spared him the disgrace of it all. Anyhow, I have yet to learn of a single mean or dishonorable act of Carl Brett's."

That night, many hours after he had left her side, Brett tossed sleeplessly from side to side, in a death-grapple with that merciless enemy of the evil-doer, which we term "Remorse."

CHAPTER XXVI

THE BETROTHAL

The two years that followed Brett's resignation from the army were busy ones for him. Between politics and the business cares with which his father entrusted him, his life was once of ceaseless activity. Representing, as he did, in his person, not only the heir to a great fortune and honored name, but the possessor of an honorable record as a soldier as well, he found the doors of political preferment opening easily before him. Within two years from his retirement from a soldier's life, he found himself both nominated and elected to represent his home district in the Congress of the United States. All prophesied for him a most brilliant career. In the opinion of many there was no office in the gift of the people too high for him to hope to attain. In the conflict which even now was seen to be inevitable, it was felt that in him the South would find both a safe and capable leadership. But neither the praise of friends or the adulation of family, made this gifted son of the Old Dominion forget that he had long had other ambitions than those of a political nature. Fond as he was of wealth and power and business, with aspirations for high position, he nevertheless cherished closer than all

these the desire to some day claim Sallie Custis for his wife. And he had some reason to hope that this day was not now far distant. All that her family and his could do to further a fondly hoped-for union had been done. Throughout the country-side, among her friends and his, their names had now been linked together as persons who sooner or later would take up life together. Brett had long since had the tacit consent, at least, of all concerned, save that of the young lady herself. As to her own feelings on the subject he still had many misgivings. He understood her far too well to take anything for granted on that score. The policy of waiting, which he had so long adopted in her case, could not go on much longer. He was now a man past early manhood, with the serious work of life full upon him. She, too, had become a fully matured woman, one fully able to think and act for herself. So, just before the time came for him to go to attend his first session as a member of Congress, he called on her one afternoon in November, just the day before he was to leave for Washington. She herself was to remain at Vaucluse until after the holidays, when the family would go to Washington, while Judge Custis was in attendance on his Senatorial duties in Washington. In response to the word that was sent her, she came down and greeted him cordially, as was her wont. "I am glad you dropped in, Carl," she said, "for I wanted to wish you success in your political career. While I, personally, always favored a soldier's career for you, I realize that in your case it was probably wise for you to go back to civil life. Father told me only yesterday that the South

was in sore need of just such men as you, in these times, when so many are prophesying a war between the sections."

"Sallie, have you never guessed that I gave up the army more for your sake than for any other reason?"

"How is that, Carl?" was her response, as she met his eager gaze with a calm, inquiring glance.

"Well, it was just this way with me. I never could figure out that there was much in life for me, unless you would share it with me. As childhood playmates, we shared our toys and pets together, so now, as man and woman, I want to share all I have, or hope to gain, with you. You have known it all these years. I told you of my love when I returned from the war with Mexico. You refused me then, yet all these years I have continued to hope. With you by my side, I can do anything. All that I have or hope to be, I lay at your feet. Wealth, position and power count as nothing to me unless with it all I can have your own dear self. Sallie, dear, will you be my wife?"

The woman to whom these burning words were addressed had long known that, sooner or later, this avowal would come, and that she must answer it once for all, yes or no. And yet, true to her womanliness, she had never permitted herself to come to a decision, until the crisis was before her. Now it was here, and had found her, as it were, unprepared. Even as he was speaking, there came to her mind the memory of that chapter of her past whose wounds were not yet healed. After that experience, had she anything left to give, which would satisfy this masterful man, who was even

now pleading his cause so powerfully and well? Was it possible to bestow, intact, that which had been once given to another? Could she, who had clung so tenaciously to her ideals, cast them all aside, and become sordid and worldly, like so many of her weaker sisters? And yet, why should she ruin her own happiness and that of her family, for the sake of one who had been unworthy of her love? One who, for the sake of satisfying a base appetite, had wantonly—as she believed—sacrificed not only his own future, but hers as well. Had not this "other one," who belonged irrevocably to her past, whether she would have it so or not, bartered, for a mess of pottage, the birthright of love, which she had so freely and wholly given to him? She was ambitious, and rightly so. Why should she not take possession of what was so freely offered her, and share in the glory and pleasure of a great career? The match would be the realization of her father's and mother's fondest wish, and she loved them dearly. The world would look upon it with unmixed favor, and not a protest would be raised in any quarter. Should she do it? Tradition, family pride, intellect and ambition all said yes, the heart, unaided and alone, said no. Even then she would have listened to her better, truer nature—have still clung to her ideals—had not the thought of that disgraceful scene at Fort Humboldt came to her at that moment. She remembered so well her last words to Burton: "I have given you my love. Treasure it well." And this was her reward. He had cared more, apparently, for satisfying his sensual appetites than for her love. The thought rankled so in her bosom, that there came to her

a thing which rarely ever entered into her pure mind and heart—a feeling of resentment and anger. Under its influence, she answered Brett's question:

"Carl, if you will accept the hand without the full surrender of the heart that should go with it, you may take it. It is all I can give now. Perhaps as the years pass, the fuller love will come. Let us hope, for your sake and mine, it may."

What man of Brett's sanguine and proud temperament ever doubted that all else would follow when he had a woman's promise that some day she should be his? He went away from Vaucluse that afternoon exultant, without one misgiving in his heart. Why should he not exult? Was he not the affianced lover of one of the fairest daughters of the South—that home of beautiful women?

CHAPTER XXVII

MARRIAGE BELLS

It was New Year's eve in Washington. It was also the wedding night of the only daughter of Judge Custis to Carl Grimke Brett, Congressman-elect from the Third Virginia District. To this event had been invited all who could rightfully claim distinction either in official or private social life of Washington. Members of the cabinet, Justices of the Supreme Court, Senators, members of Congress and officers of the army and navy, in resplendent uniforms, were present in large numbers.

The night of the wedding was cold, blustery and stormy. Snow was falling in fitful gusts, as carriage after carriage with wedding guests stopped at the door of the beautiful home on Dupont Circle. And what of the bride in whose honor they were now assembling?

Was she happy on this, her wedding day? That was a question that could only be answered by the bride herself. Were there no shadows across the path which she was about to tread? From her manner one could never have guessed it, and yet she was not entering that holy estate with all that joy and exquisite happiness which she had thought would be hers on her marriage day.

But what to the world was an ideal match, was to her but the shattering of her own ideals. She was not marrying the man she loved best in all the world. Try as hard as she might to imagine that she had uprooted the old love from her heart and had supplanted it with a new, her own honest heart told her that it was not true. Condemn her erstwhile lover as she might, say to herself that he was unworthy of her and had betrayed the great trust that she had bestowed on him so freely—nevertheless she knew that deep down in the depths of her own warm, loving heart, there was a place for him alone which none other could ever take away. It had been his ever since that day at the riding academy, when she knew that, as he had mastered others, he had, unknown to himself, mastered her. That place was his even on this, her wedding night, and it would be his until the end of the great mystery termed life. And for an hour that night before the ceremony she shut herself away from all others and communed with him alone. It was the final libation she was offering on the ashes of a dead love. "It would be the last," she said. "For to-night she was free. Tomorrow she would be another's, and then, faithful to her wifely charge, she would set her eyes on the future and forget the past—if she could."

And now while the strains of Mendelssohn's wedding march are telling the guests that the bride and groom are coming to the altar, and while the solemn vows are being taken, which unite for weal or woe Sallie Custis to Carl Brett, let us glance at another scene that is taking place close by.

On the curb outside, standing in the shade of a flick-

ering street lamp, unprotected from the elements, stands a lonely figure wrapped in an overcoat of faded army blue. Drawn thither from his own desolate western home by a motive that is as difficult of analyzation as of realization, Sallie Custis's discarded lover was, unknown to her, standing a few paces away from where his more fortunate rival was to lead her to the altar. His presence there, on such a night and occasion, was in a way the same tribute that we pay when we take a last look at the face of a departed friend. While she—surrounded by a brilliant circle of the great of the earth—was receiving the congratulations of the guests, in the brilliantly lighted home within—he, the all but social outcast, was elbowing his way in darkness through the beggars who hovered like moths around this festal scene of nuptial love and merriment. For her that night the wedding march whispered of a life of social brilliancy as the wife of one whose every move spelled success, and for whom the future seemed to hold the highest honors. For him the night seemed to toll a requiem of dead hopes and blasted aspirations. Failure had long since claimed him for her own. And he waited there in the cold and falling snow, elbowed by the street beggars and mongrel throng of idle curiosity-seekers, until the door of the great house opened, to allow the newly married couple to enter the carriage, which had long been in waiting to bear them to the station. With the rest of the "waifs" who were abroad that bitter night, he was pushed roughly back by the policemen, who sought to make room for the chief actors in the wedding festivities within. As Carl Brett, with his wife

on his arm, came down the steps, the patient watcher caught what with an inexplicable persistence he had waited for long that night—a glimpse of the bride herself. She was heavily veiled, but it needed not the familiar presence of Brett himself to tell the one who had so long kept his lonely vigil on the curb, that the woman by his side was Sallie Custis. A moment later the carriage door is closed and they are driven rapidly away. Then the figure in the worn military coat vanished as mysteriously as it had come, in the darkness of the winter's night.

Long hours that night this "man who had failed" sat motionless before a smoldering grate fire. In his lap are a parcel of letters, tied with a faded blue ribbon. With them is the faded bunch of violets which Sallie Custis had given him on the day when he wrested from Brett the laurels in the riding contest Commencement week. On his face could be seen no play of emotions, only a dull, hopeless expression as if the sands of time had for him about run out. As if life itself had become one of bare animal existence, without hope or compensation. But suddenly there came into that careworn face a look as tender and sweet as that of a woman to her first-born babe. He pressed the faded flowers to his lips, kissed them once more long and reverently, then threw them with the letters into the ashes. In a moment they had caught fire, and he watched them until the last flame had died out. Fit symbol of the vanishing of life's fondest hopes and deepest aspirations.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE CALM BEFORE THE STORM

TWELVE years have elapsed since the day of the marriage of Sallie Custis to Carl Grimke Brett. The latter has prospered greatly during all these years, until it could be truthfully said, that few had more influence than he in the political party to which he belonged. He stood among the foremost leaders of the South in those troublesome times of '60-'61, when the leadership carried with it the gravest responsibilities.

And what of the other—the Northerner—whose fortunes have ebbed so low since the day he resigned from the army to take up civil life?

The story of Burton's life during these years had been, on the surface, at least, a most unsuccessful one. Save for the failures which followed each new attempt on his part to solve the problem of making a livelihood, it had been uneventful in the extreme. There had been for him "no listening Senates" to hold and command. He had first tried farming, in an earnest, manly effort to earn his living from the soil. Surely this was for him a reversion to first principles and one that promised success. He stripped the land of its timber and grubbed it carefully. But somehow the crops always failed. In

winter he chopped wood with his own hands, loaded it on a wagon, and hauled it to the neighboring city, where he offered it for sale in the open market. In quick succession, he had tried real estate, insurance and clerking in a store, and in each had been equally unsuccessful. And so the years for him had drifted by, finding him at thirty-nine, a man without a profession, or a trade, that he could call his own. Aside from experience, he had accumulated nothing during all this time.

In the early winter of 1860-61 there rode out to Burton's home, one snowy day, a horseman dressed in the fatigue uniform of a captain of infantry. The rider drove up to the gate, there dismounted and tied his horse. Then, with a long, swinging stride, he went to the door of the house and knocked. Burton opened the door, and at the same moment exclaimed: "Well, Dad, is it you? How glad I am to see you!"

It was, indeed, his old West Point chum, "Dad" Rankin, who had braved the storm that cold winter morning, in order to invite him to a dinner at his hotel that night, to which all the West Pointers of their day who were now in the immediate vicinity, had been invited. With some evident hesitation, Burton replied:

"Dad, I appreciate more than I have words to express, your coming out here to-day. This meeting with you has brought with it more happiness than I have known for many a day. I would like to meet once more the old army friends, but I fear they don't want me. They are successful men, Dad, and you know successful men have no time for failures. No, that is how they regard me, and it is probably best that I should deny

myself the pleasure of being with you at that dinner rather than find myself where I am not wanted.

"For ten years now I have been practically out of the world and forgotten. Occasionally, but only at rare intervals, I have met on my few visits to neighboring cities, some old army comrade, but never for more than a few moments' chat. Since my resignation from the army, I have scarcely known what it is to meet army men on a social footing. These things, coupled with the circumstances which led to my resignation from the army—all of which I know full well have been widely circulated in every army post in the country where I am known—make me disinclined to embrace this opportunity to renew the friendships of my cadet and army days."

But "Dad" Rankin was not the sort of a man to take "no" for an answer, and he all but dragged his former classmate off with him to the hotel in the neighboring city, where the dinner was to be held. So that night found "Dad" Rankin, Joe Reynolds, Nat Lyon, Don Carlos Buell, Chaffee, Beale, Prince and Burton all gathered around the festive board together.

In the course of the talk which followed Burton heard Brett's name frequently mentioned among others, and learned that he had every reason to hope soon for an election to the United States Senate. He had already become a national figure and was counted as one of the most bitter and irreconcilable of the Southern Congressmen. All those present at the hotel that night were known to be "true blue Union men" in sentiment, and so the discussion of the political situation and of the civil

conflict which all knew to be fast approaching, was free and unreserved. Of all those present, Burton alone had estimated aright the fighting spirit and soldierly qualities of the Southern men.

"If the conflict comes," he said, in his calm, intense manner, "it will be no ninety-day affair, as some of you seem to imagine."

"Burton is right," exclaimed a florid-faced man of forty and over, with a reddish beard, broad, high forehead and keen, deep blue eyes. This was Lyon, the Connecticut Yankee, who had graduated from West Point in '41.

Rarely would you meet a more extraordinary man than "Nat" Lyon. The discussion which was taking place around him had aroused him thoroughly, and he now proceeded to speak with great vehemence.

"Gentlemen, I for one do not believe in compromising or treating with men who are plotting treason. I will see every man, woman and child in Missouri under the sod before I will consent that Jackson or Price, or any other tool of the secession leaders, shall dictate to the government of the United States as to what shall be done with the Federal troops under my command. If this war does come, it will be brought on by the extremists of both sections, and I admit that I belong to this class. But this secession crowd forgets that conciliation, the spirit of compromise, common interest and mutual charity are the foundations of all true government of and by the people. And I, for one, am willing if necessary to take up my sword even against my own countrymen. And for what, you ask? To efface any

insult that may be offered to the flag, to save the country from the deathblow of disunion, to enforce the supremacy of the constitution, to maintain the national existence; for these and for more will I gladly offer my life on the altar of my country's cause.

"I, for one, am unwilling to stand by and see a government, created by all, destroyed by a part. Before that shall occur I and a million other men will march beneath the old flag, not merely that some of its imperishable stars may not be dimmed, not merely that its folds may fly unchallenged from the Gulf to the Lakes, but that on its folds may ultimately be written the words, 'Let us have peace.' I care nothing for the pride, the form or circumstance of war. It matters little to me whether the eagle or the stars rest on my shoulders. But I want to feel, in the evening of my life, if I am spared until then, that I have defended the law and helped to preserve the peace of this great land. In America every door is opened to him who can gain the strength and wisdom to open it. On equal terms and with equal opportunities, we can enjoy in after-life, not the glory which our fathers gave us, but that which we ourselves are able to win."

In the days to come, long after the speaker had fallen so gloriously leading his troops at Wilson's Creek, those who sat around the table this night recalled to mind the ringing words of the fearless soldier. Call him abolitionist, extremist or fanatic as you will, his was a great life. Boundless laurels would undoubtedly have been his had he lived to the termination of the conflict. But history will not forget him. A truer, more patriotic,

better soldier never lived than Lyon. In the years to come our country will be proud of the fact that she had such sons and grieve that she has lost them, and prayers will be offered that she may have more like them.

Many were the speculations that were made that night as to how certain men, whose families or associations had been with the South, would go. All were agreed that Scott would, of course, stay with the Union. As to his favorite, Lee, some doubt was expressed as to what his course would be. Common report had it, that if Scott's age should prevent his taking upon himself the responsibilities of supreme command, that then it would be offered to Lee. It was also reported that Lee had said, on at least one occasion, recently, that if Virginia should stand by the Union, he would do the same. But if she should secede, that then he would follow his native state into the ranks of the confederacy. In this case, it would be necessary to find some one else to take up the burden of leadership for the federal army. In this connection the names mentioned most frequently by those present around the table that night in the Planters Hotel, were McClellan, Thomas, McDowell, Kearney and Fremont. As to the two Johnstons and Beauregard, the opinion was freely expressed that they would go with the South.

And so the discussion lasted until long after midnight. All agreed that the conflict was sure to come. It was merely a question of time. And when the hour arrived, the country must lean on those of her sons whom she had educated at West Point, for just such emergencies as these. To Burton the crisis promised

what he had longed for every day since his resignation —a return to the army. He craved the companionship of men of his own type. He did not like to live apart from his fellows. His wishes were destined to be realized sooner than he, or any of the little company assembled there that night, even dreamed. Nine days later South Carolina passed the ordinance of secession.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE CALL TO ARMS

One evening in April, 1861, as Burton was preparing with his own hands his simple supper, in the humble quarters where he had taken up his abode, one of his neighbors driving past stopped and spoke to him from the highway:

"Captain, I have some news for you."

Burton stepped to the door and inquired, in his quiet tone, what the visitor had to tell.

"Fort Sumter was fired upon yesterday by General Beauregard, and the regulars in the garrison, under Anderson, answered his fire."

Then, without waiting to hear the comment that might be made on this fateful bit of news, the neighbor passed on to tell others. For the moment Burton was stunned with the announcement and could hardly believe his ears. Was it possible that his old comrade in arms of the Mexican War—"Pete" Beauregard—whom he remembered so well, had issued orders to fire upon the flag of his country? Had at last come the irrepressible conflict of which so much had been said and written? For a long time that night he sat before the open fireplace, thinking not only of the fierce crisis which now

confronted the nation, but also much of his own future which seemed so dark and gruesome. The world, he felt, had long since pronounced its verdict upon him. The word "failure" had been written in somber letters over his name. It was said of him, he knew, that he was weighed in the great moral balance and found wanting. If he but enlisted for the war which he now knew was imminent, it seemed almost certain that in the mad rush for place and preferment he would be forgotten. Nevertheless his duty seemed clear. The country—that government which had educated him as a soldier and to which he had sworn allegiance—needed him in its hour of travail. He could offer his life for his country. This at least could not be refused him.

So he journeyed, the next day, to the capital of the State wherein he now made his home, there to offer his services to his adopted State, which he knew would soon be busily engaged in enlisting regiments in the service. Once there he found the officers in a furore of excitement. Every one was talking of war and of its possible outcome. Again, he heard the names of many of his old comrades in arms mentioned in connection with the subject of leadership of that mighty army which would soon be mustered in. Scott, the veteran of two wars, although too old for active service, was unquestionably for the Union. Wool was probably loyal; of Twiggs' attitude grave doubts were expressed. Cooper, the two Johnstons and Beauregard had already gone with the South. Many and diverse were the opinions expressed as to the steps that might be taken by the other West Pointers who hailed from Southern States. But amidst

it all there seemed to be nothing for him to do. That night he sat down in his room and wrote the following letter:

To Col. Lorenzo Thomas,

Adjutant-General U. S. A., Washington, D. C.

Sir: After serving for fifteen years in the regular army, including four years at West Point, and feeling it is the duty of every one who has been educated at the Government's expense to offer his services for that Government, I have the honor very respectfully to offer my services until the close of the war in such capacity as may be afforded. I would say in view of my present age and length of service that I feel myself competent to command a regiment if the President in his judgment should see fit to entrust one to me.

I am, your obedient servant,

Samuel Burton.

This completed, he mailed it, and rested that night in the belief that the government would certainly find something for him to do. But the days came and went and no answer was received. Apparently the nation had no need for his services. Then he applied to the Governor of his adopted State. This time his appeal was not in vain. The Governor had noticed the quiet, unobtrusive individual who had for some time been helping him to organize the State troops. The Congressman from Burton's district had recommended him for a position, but for a time at least it seemed that his political influence carried no weight. In a conversation

with a friend, Burton said: "I left the army expecting never to return. I am no seeker for a position, but the country which educated me is in sore peril and as a man of honor I feel bound to offer my services for whatever they are worth. However, I feel this is no place for me. I will not be an office-seeker and I cannot afford to stay here idle."

"Hold on a little, Captain," replied his friend, "everything can't be done in a minute. Have patience. Remember all things come to him who waits. We need just such men as you, men of military education and experience. Wouldn't you like the command of one of the regiments of State troops? As things are going, I don't know why you are not entitled to a colonelcy as well as any one."

"To tell the truth," replied Burton after a moment's hesitation, "I would rather like a regiment, yet there are few men really competent to command a thousand soldiers and I doubt whether I am one of them."

A few days later the Governor met this friend and said to him: "What kind of a man is this Captain Burton? Though anxious to serve, he seems reluctant to take any high position. He even declined the offer I made him a day or two ago to recommend him to Washington for a brigadier-generalship, saying that he did not want office until he earned it. What does he want?"

"The way to deal with him," replied the other, "is to ask no questions, but simply order him to duty. He will obey promptly."

The day after this conversation the Governor sent

for Captain Burton, but found he had gone home. Thereupon he despatched this message to him: "You are this day appointed Colonel of the Twenty-first Illinois Volunteers, and requested to take the command at once." He promptly accepted the offer and his commission was issued as of June 16th, 1861. He was much elated over his appointment, which brought to his mind vividly his ill-success in Cincinnati, to which point he had gone to apply to his old comrade in arms, McClellan, for a possible appointment on his staff. McClellan at this time was looming up on the military horizon and was looked upon as a future Napoleon. Burton called at his headquarters and found officers rushing hither and thither as if on errands of life and death. There was indeed so much pomp and ceremony that McClellan found no time to see his visitor. Burton waited several days for an interview, and then growing weary and disheartened he returned once more to the Illinois Capital.

Soon after the news of his appointment was received, he took the train for Springfield and reported at once to the Governor. The latter ordered him to assume command of his regiment, which was then at Springfield. The next day the Twenty-first Illinois was called out on review in order that their new Colonel might assume command. He was dressed in citizen's clothes, an old coat worn at the elbows, and a broad-brimmed hat, the worse for wear.

Certainly the first impression made upon his command by the new Colonel of the Twenty-first Illinois Regiment was anything but favorable. The principal

features of the occasion were long and eloquent addresses by Congressmen Logan and McClernand. When this ordeal had been safely gone through with, the men were ordered to their quarters. Before taking command, Burton made a flying visit to his home, where he met with the kindness of his old friends. His regiment had been mustered in for only thirty days, but at the expiration of that time it reënlisted for the war.

Soon after the State of Missouri called for aid. The Governor said to Burton: "Colonel, I would send another regiment to Missouri if I had transportation, but that is wanting." "Order mine," replied Burton, "I will find transportation." He executed the order by marching his men on foot into northern Missouri as the surest and quickest way to make soldiers of them. On their way thither, the regiment reached Salt River, Missouri. From there they were ordered to Florida, Missouri, to search for General Tom Harris, who was supposed to be in that neighborhood with a large rebel command.

CHAPTER XXX

COLONEL BURTON MOVES AGAINST THE ENEMY

After crossing with his men from Illinois to northern Missouri, Burton found himself in a region where the population was equally divided in its sympathies between the North and South. Missouri was one of the Border States, and was attempting at this time to join the Confederacy. It was the fixed purpose of the National Government to prevent this, if a possible thing. To this end, Burton's command while en route to Mexico, Missouri, was met at Salt River, with orders to move at once to Florida, Missouri, where General Tom Harris was said to be assembling a large and particularly bloodthirsty army of Southern sympathizers. It was necessary to go into camp a few days at Salt River in order to wait for the reënforcements which had been ordered up from St. Louis, to enable Burton to move with a force sufficient to annihilate the redoubtable Harris.

While in camp at Salt River, a visitor presented himself at headquarters and asked permission to see Colonel Burton. An audience with this unassuming commander was not as difficult to obtain as was the case with some

of the would-be "Napoleons" of that time, and he was soon ushered into the presence of the officer in command of all the forces at Salt River. The latter was writing at a drygoods box which served as a writing-desk for the Federal commander. He looked up as his visitor was ushered in rather unceremoniously by the orderly, and a smile of pleased recognition overspread his countenance as he rose and grasped his hand.

"Well, Benedict, it is truly a pleasure to see you again."

It was indeed his old friend of Eureka and the one who had befriended him so loyally that night at the What Cheer House at San Francisco. Dismissing the orderly, Burton invited his visitor to take the only remaining camp stool, and then followed a half hour of pleasant chat. At the start Burton was the questioner and Benedict was the one who answered. All the old friends and acquaintances at Fort Humboldt and in the neighboring village of Eureka, were each inquired about in turn.

Of no one did he inquire more solicitously than of his friend James T. Ryan, Benedict's partner in the mill at Eureka. The latter reported that a short time before Ryan had called on President Lincoln with Senator McDougall. The latter had introduced him to the President in this wise: "Mr. President, this is 'Jim' Ryan, who can build a cathedral and preach in it, a ship and sail in it, or an engine and run it."

Later the tables were turned and Benedict became the questioner. "Colonel, would you pardon what is far from mere curiosity, if I ventured to ask you to tell

me something of your own life, since we last parted in Frisco?"

"Certainly, Benedict, you if any one, deserve my confidence to that extent at least. It is now some seven years since I bade you good-by in California. During that time I have tried my hand at a little of everything. First, I went back to my early vocation as a farmer and tried that for a while. Somehow things all went wrong with me. Between crop failures, malaria and rheumatism I had a sorry enough time. In the fall I felled and cut timber and then in winter-time I hauled the wood to town and sold it in the public market. Not a very aristocratic occupation for a West Pointer was it, yet it was honest work, and it provided me with a livelihood at any rate. Later on I tried the real estate business and was a glorious failure at it. When the war broke out I was farming, but I never cared for it. After trying to get a place on the staff of my old army friend McClellan and having failed, I finally wrote to the Adjutant-General at Washington offering my services direct to the Government. The receipt of my letter was not even acknowledged. Probably the politicians were being fitted out with commissions at that time and there was no time to give to a veteran officer of the Mexican War. But later, Governor Yates was kind enough, thanks to my personal acquaintance with him and the recommendation of a few friends, to appoint me Colonel of the Twenty-first Illinois Volunteers. Just at present, I am rather reluctantly leading that regiment into what we, one and

all, suspect to be the 'jaws of death,' otherwise known as Tom Harris's clutches."

Benedict smiled at the grim humor of the last remark, and then proceeded to comment briefly on the story of the one, with whose destiny his own seemed so strangely intermingled.

"Colonel, I thank you for your confidence and may I add that I believe the future holds great things for you? Did I not think so, I would not be here on the errand that brought me to this spot. While in New York I read in the papers the news of your appointment to this command. I had come East as soon as Sumter was fired on, intending to enlist. When I learned that an old friend had been appointed to a Colonelcy in the West, I determined to cast my lot in with him. Colonel Burton, I am an applicant for a position on your staff."

The person addressed did not reply for a moment, but when he did it was in this wise:

"Benedict, I have nothing now that I can give you, except to take you along with me in a supernumerary capacity, without pay or title. However, I have some reason to believe that when President Lincoln makes his appointment of Brigadier-Generals, my name will be among the number. If this turns out to be true, I promise you a position on my staff, with the rank of Captain, if I can bring it about. Is that satisfactory?"

Benedict assented, and then withdrew to quarters which his friend caused to be assigned to him.

Two days later, the Twenty-first Illinois, in company with two other regiments, moved forward in the direc-

tion of Florida, Missouri. Burton as the senior Colonel present, was in command of the entire body of troops. As they approached the summit of a hill which was supposed to look down upon the spot where the redoubtable "Tom" Harris and his embattled host held forth, the raw recruits under Burton's command became perceptibly nervous.

They were marching towards what they supposed was the seat of war. Happily for them it turned out that Harris had as little desire as had his opponent to destroy the peaceful aspect of that locality or to shed his blood on that forlorn spot. As Burton approached the place for the first time in his life with more than an entire regiment of men at his back, he supposed that in all human probability Harris's troops were just ready to come over the brow of the hill in his direction. Indeed he more than half expected that in a moment they would be tearing down upon his men like a whirlwind. His heart seemed to be in his throat, and he felt like retreating. Rumors as to the size of the opposing army had grown more awesome as the day progressed. What was supposed to be a force of a thousand men a few days ago, had suddenly, as if by magic, grown to five thousand. Some few of the farmers along the road (of markedly Southern sympathies, however), even "calkilated that there might be night onto ten thousand sojirs with Tom Harris"—and all in camp at the foot of the hill near Florida, Missouri. By example as well as by many words of judicious encouragement, Burton —aided in no small degree by his new aide, Benedict— succeeded in keeping up the morale of his army to the

point where they were still willing to move in the direction of the enemy.

As he and Benedict rode at the head of the little army of two thousand men, he remarked laughingly to the latter:

"Benedict, did you ever think how much easier it is to follow than to lead? In old Mexico, just so long as the responsibility was on the other fellow, I went into battle without fear or trepidation. To-day, with an army behind me and myself in supreme command, I am frank to say that I am as near a panic as I have ever been in my life. I honestly believe that if it were not a matter of duty, I would certainly have stopped this army of mine, for an hour at least, until the commander-in-chief got over being scared. But anyhow, this feeling won't last long, for in a moment we shall be at the top of that hill and then, I suppose, this dread incarnation of battle they call General Tom Harris, will proceed to eat us alive."

The words had hardly been spoken before the summit was reached, and the low-lying pastoral village of Florida was spread out before them. As he gazed upon the smoldering fires and deserted camp paraphernalia of the opposing army, which had fled in precipitate haste only an hour before, a broad smile passed over the ordinarily impassive face of the Federal *generalissimo*.

"Well, Benedict, I have now had my first lesson in independent command. Out of it I have gleaned at least one great truth. It is this: Always remember no matter what the contest may be, the other fellow is just

as much afraid of you, as you are of him and perchance as in the case of our friend Harris, even more so. The moment I found that he was doing the running away instead of myself, I felt a fierce and resistless desire to enter upon a most vigorous and malignant pursuit. With the backs of the enemy turned towards me, I determined that the hosts of treason must be pursued, now that they had already commenced to run."

Shortly after this came the information that the President had at last made his long-promised appointment of Brigadier-Generals, and that out of the forty officers appointed, Burton's name was nineteenth on the list. And thus at the age of thirty-nine the ex-Captain in the regular army found himself once again back in the army, and this time wearing the single star of a Brigadier-General.

CHAPTER XXXI

HOW BURTON FOUND HIMSELF

From the very beginning of the great Civil War, the ill-fortune which had followed Burton since his resignation from the army with such seemingly fatal persistency, suddenly left him. The conflict was not fairly commenced before he was given without the asking, what had been refused to all except the highest in command. He found himself with an independent command and a chance to do great things with it, if he were but the man for the place. The means and the opportunity were his. Had he the ability to utilize it to the fullest measure? At first he attracted no attention outside of the small district which had been given him to command. Then came, on his own initiative, a skillful movement up the Ohio whereby Paducah was captured and Kentucky saved to the Union. This was followed closely by the skirmish at Belmont, which prevented Polk from sending reinforcements to Price in Missouri when the latter State was wavering in its allegiance to the National Government.

A silence of two months and then the country awoke one morning to learn that an obscure Western Brigadier had fought and won the greatest battle of the war.

With the twin victories at Henry and Donelson, came fifteen thousand prisoners and more guns than were possessed by his own invincible army. No such victory had ever before been won on this continent. The country was in a furore of jubilation. All were now inquiring who is this new general, whose star is rising out of the boundless West? Burton was made Major-General of Volunteers and given a larger command. The victory at Donelson brought all Kentucky and part of Tennessee into the hands of the Government and made necessary the evacuation of Columbus and Nashville. The country had scarcely recovered from the exuberance of its joy over Donelson, before there came news that at Shiloh, after two days of the hardest fighting imaginable, had occurred the defeat of the flower of the Southern army under Albert Sidney Johnston. As was the case with all of Burton's victories, it was fruitful with results. It threw New Orleans into the hands of the North; it opened the Mississippi to Memphis, and it dealt the Confederate cause a blow in the West from which it never recovered. Once more the country was stirred from one end to the other by the victory of the silent man of destiny. But Shiloh was but the precursor of a campaign which was destined to pass into history, as one of the greatest in the annals of war. It was that of Vicksburg. The campaign that bears this name was suggested and developed by circumstances. The elections of 1862 had gone against the prosecution of the war. Voluntary enlistments had nearly ceased and the draft had been resorted to. This was resisted, and to defeat the purposes of the

copperheads at home, a decisive victory was necessary. As usual, it fell to the silent commander to accomplish it. Then came the spectacular running of the batteries at Vicksburg by the transports carrying the Northern army to a landing place below that city. This was followed by the memorable movement towards the capital of Mississippi, while two hostile armies threatened both before and behind. No general ever conceived a more daring scheme. There was no precedent for it in warfare. It was this. To interpose his forces between two armies and beat them in detail, first driving Johnston eastward and then to turn upon Pemberton, crushing him in battle and push him into Vicksburg. To do this he had to cut loose from his base altogether to live on the country. With sublime self-reliance he took the destinies of the army and the nation upon his shoulders and wrought out a triumph that could have been obtained in no other way.

Jackson was captured the day before a new commander arrived, and only a few days before large reinforcements were expected. A rapid movement west was then made, the garrison of Vicksburg was met in two engagements, badly defeated and driven back into the stronghold and there successfully besieged. On the nation's birthday in 1863 the citadel of the Confederacy in the Southwest fell, and with it 31,600 prisoners were surrendered, together with 172 cannon and 60,000 muskets. The news of the victory lifted a great load of anxiety from the mind of the great war president. With the fall of Vicksburg the fate of the Confederacy was sealed. It was cut in twain and the Mississippi

from its source to its mouth, was in the hands of the Federal Government. The victor of Vicksburg was made a Major-General in the regular army, and given command of the entire Western armies. The great war-president wrote him the following autograph letter:

"My Dear General: I do not remember that you and I have ever met personally. I write this now as a grateful acknowledgement for the almost inestimable service you have done the country. I wish to say a word further. When you first reached the vicinity of Vicksburg I thought you should do what you finally did —march the troops across the neck, run the batteries with the transports and thus go below; and I never had any faith except a general hope that you knew better than I that the Yazoo Pass expedition and the like could succeed. When you got below and took Port Gibson, Grand Gulf and vicinity, I thought you should go down the river and join General Banks, and when you turned northward, east of the Big Black, I feared it was a mistake. I now wish to make the personal acknowledgment that you were right and I was wrong.

"Yours very truly,

"A. Lincoln."

This letter in its way was more gratifying to its recipient than the adulation of a nation.

Four months more elapsed and then came still more glorious news of the soldier who had yet to fight a losing battle. It was the glad tidings of the glorious victories of the Chattanooga campaign, the battles of Look-

out Mountain and Missionary Ridge. These were the most perfect battles in all their details that were fought throughout the war. Few generals would have had the temerity to order an assault on what was apparently an impregnable position. Fewer still would have had the skill to weaken a seemingly invincible center as was done at Missionary Ridge and then detect just the psychological moment for making the final assault. In one stroke, the skillful hand of this great master of the art of war had destroyed Bragg's army and rescued Burnside from his perilous position at Knoxville and transformed at a stroke a besieging army into a besieged. At this time, pursuant to the universal demand of the people a bill passed Congress reviving the grade of Lieutenant-General. All understood for whose benefit it was passed. The appointment to the supreme command of all the armies, which the title carried with it, belonged by virtue and uninterrupted succession of unparalleled victories to the "Man of Destiny" alone. It was at this time that his greatest lieutenant in the field, his elder in years, wrote to him in these words:

"You are now Washington's legitimate successor and occupy a position of almost dangerous elevation. But if you can continue as heretofore to be yourself—simple, honest and unpretending—you will enjoy through life the respect and love of friends and the homage of millions of human beings, that will award you a large share in securing to them and their descendants a government of law and stability. Until you won

Donelson I confess I was almost awed by the terrible array of anarchical elements that presented themselves at every point. But that admitted a ray of light which I have followed since. I believe you are as brave, patriotic and just as the great prototype Washington—as unselfish, kindhearted and honest as a man should be. But the chief characteristic is the simple faith in success you have always manifested, which I can liken to nothing else than the faith of a Christian in his Savior."

Then came the word summoning him to Washington to accept the supreme command. On the ninth of March, 1864, at the age of forty-two years, he stood before Abraham Lincoln in the White House, who spoke to him these words:

"The nation's appreciation of what you have done and its reliance upon you for what remains to be done in the existing great struggle, are now presented with this commission, constituting you Lieutenant-General of the army of the United States. With this high honor devolves upon you a corresponding responsibility. As the country herein trusts you, so under God, it will sustain you. I scarcely need to add that what I here speak goes with my own hearty personal concurrence."

There was a moment's silence as the clear, penetrating voice of the President died away and then there came from the Man of Destiny this response:

"Mr. President, I accept the commission with gratitude for the high honor conferred. With the aid of the noble armies that have fought on so many fields for our common country, it will be my earnest endeavor not to

disappoint your expectations. I feel the full weight of the responsibilities now devolving on me, and I know that if they are met, it will be due to those armies, and above all, to the favor of that Providence which leads both nations and men."

The next day found the Lieutenant-General of the army on a visit to the army of the Potomac, with whose fortunes his own were now to be inseparably linked until the close of the war. All felt sure, soldier and civilian alike, that truly now a leader had been found, upon whom the nation might safely lean in its hour of extremity. And now as a million men moved here and there upon the chessboard of war, at the touch of a single hand, even the most credulous could scarcely be brought to believe that the one-time occupant of that wretched loft in the San Francisco boarding-house of a few years before, was one and the same with the person who now held in the hollow of his hand the fate of armies and a nation. And yet the despairing hopeless man of the "What Cheer House" was even now in command of more troops than had ever before in all time been under the control of a single mind. He, after whose name an impatient world had long ago written the word "failure," had now become the most uniformly successful commander the world had ever seen. In the space of three years he had risen by his own unaided efforts from the colonelcy of a regiment of volunteers to the command of the entire Federal army. Truly the world's opinions are often twilight judgments. It seldom sees clearly, until the man has gone to his final resting place. So in the case of the Man of Destiny, it had

indeed erred grievously. It could not realize that the disgraced officer of Fort Humboldt had in him the grasp of things military, which saved Kentucky and Missouri to the Union. It might well have scoffed at the idea that the seemingly beaten man of the sailors' boarding-house, was he who with unyielding purpose secured the unconditional surrender at Donelson. It would have laughed to scorn the one who would have had the temerity to prophesy that the unsuccessful farmer of a few years before had in him that soul of iron which withstood the awful carnage of that first day's fight at Shiloh, and snatched victory from apparent defeat on the second. It would have doubted the sanity of the man who would have been bold enough to foretell that the humble seller of wood in the public marts of a Western city, would some day win for the nation those matchless victories at Vicksburg and Chattanooga. Aye, truly, the Man of Destiny has found himself at last.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE BATTLE OF THE WILDERNESS

Much controversy has arisen in the past, and more will doubtless arise in the future relative to the question as to what was the decisive battle of the Civil War. Gettysburg, the Wilderness, and half a score of others might be mentioned—each have their supporters—but none save the two first named have any just claim to that distinction. In the judgment of the historian the contest for supremacy—if such it may be called—must lie between the battle of Gettysburg on the one hand and that of the Wilderness on the other. When it comes to choosing between these, the honor, it is believed, must unquestionably be given to that of the Wilderness. To satisfy the mind of the impartial reader on this point, let us go back three years and trace the course of events since the memorable 12th day of April, 1861, when Edmund Ruffin, under Beauregard's direction, fired the first shot on the national ensign at Fort Sumter.

The opening of the war had witnessed the "On to Richmond" campaign of McDowell, which wrote its epitaph at Bull Run. This event was followed by the advent of McClellan as the chief actor, for the time

being, in the great drama commenced but a few months before. With unquestioned abilities as organizer, he undertook the spectacular Peninsular Campaign which embraced the transportation of his troops by water to the region of the lower Chesapeake, to be followed by the promised triumphal march to the goal of all campaigns of the day, the city of Richmond. McClellan, after spending weeks in the deadly swamps of the Chickahominy, and fighting a series of battles there and around Richmond, ended for the time being his meteoric career in disaster and retreat.

Next Pope—the hero of some successes in the West, attempted some serious moves on the Virginia chessboard, but was cleverly checkmated by his more able antagonist at the second battle of Bull Run. Then McClellan—eager for opportunity to regain his lost laurels—fought the battle of Antietam. Here, though successful in driving the enemy from Maryland, he yet failed completely in his attempt to annihilate the Southern army as well as to prevent the orderly retreat of Lee's veteran troops back to their camping ground in the Old Dominion.

Burnside, without desire or solicitation on his part, was pressed into service as leader of what appeared to be almost a vain hope—that of vanquishing Lee's army on Virginia soil. At Fredericksburg his magnificent army passed through the "valley of the shadow of death" to awful defeat. This ended the campaign in the East for the year of 1862.

The next year's Eastern campaign opened with Hooker in comamnd at Chancellorsville, where Robert

E. Lee gained his greatest and most brilliant victory. Emboldened by his uninterrupted success against the commanders sent against him by the Federal Government, the Confederate chieftain now commenced his long-cherished project of invading the North. At Gettysburg he met his first serious reverse at the hands of George Gordon Meade, the then commander of the army of the Potomac. True it is that this great battle was pregnant with far-reaching results. It stopped successfully the boldest attempt made during the war to invade northern soil. Beyond doubt it dealt a heavy yet by no means a crushing blow to the hopes of the Confederacy. The losses sustained by the army of Virginia in that titanic struggle destroyed in some measure the aggressive force of the Southern army as well as weakened for the time being its morale. Yet Lee's masterly retreat after the battle, unattended by vigorous pursuit on the part of his opponent, followed later by successes at the engagements of Rappahannock Station and Mine Run, did much to repair the morale of the army, as well as to restore its implicit faith in its chosen leader.

The real ending of the Gettysburg campaign came at Mine Run and found the army of the Potomac but little nearer its great goal, than it had been in the early days of the war. Gettysburg was simply the flood tide of the marvelously successful career of Robert E. Lee.

The opening of the year 1864 found the army of Virginia fully as strong in numbers as it had been with the added virtue that it was now an army of veterans under a leadership seldom surpassed. The taking of

Richmond was regarded in the South as a Northern dream—incapable of realization—while at the North, the destruction of Lee's army appeared so formidable as to cause all but the greatest to shrink from the task.

Then how can Gettysburg be called the greatest battle of the Civil War? It was not. It but traces upon the map of war the high-water mark of the tide of battle which swept the country from the Far West to the shores of the Atlantic.

The Wilderness alone was the real crisis of the war between the sections—the beginning of the end.

And now a word descriptive of that dark and somber region where the battle was fought.

In the commonwealth of old Virginia there is a tract of forest land about fifteen miles square, extending from the Rapidan River toward Spottsylvania, and equidistant from Fredericksburg on the east and Orange Mountains on the west. It is occasionally broken by small farms and abandoned clearings and deeply gutted by numerous streams known in that region as the "runs." It is an elevated plateau, the surface of which is broken by occasional hills near the center of the tract. The region rests on a field of mineral rocks, and for many years in colonial days, Alexander Spottswood, the "Tubal Cain" of old Virginia, had his iron mines and furnaces there. To build the latter he cut down heavy timbers all over the entire region and in its place has arisen a second growth of low-limbed and scraggy pines, dwarfed oaks, junipers and hazel. Among these, vines and creepers of all kinds grow in great profusion, forming dense underbrush. Across these places run

labyrinthian paths known only for the most part to the natives of that region. The whole place has been well termed "the region of the shadow of death."

From east to west along the northern boundary of the Wilderness runs the Rapidan River, which has its source in the Rappahannock just north of Chancellorsville. The region can be entered from the north by the Germania Road, running from the Germania Ford on the Rapidan, southeasterly to its junction near the middle of the Wilderness with the Brock Road, which in its turn runs in a southeasterly direction to Spottsylvania Court House. It may also be entered from the north through Ely's Ford, six miles to the east of the Germania Ford. From Ely's Ford a road runs six miles south, forming a junction with the Germania Road at a point where it meets the Brock Road in the heart of the Wilderness.

The region may also be approached from the east, starting from the Orange Court House at the foot of the Blue Mountains, in three different ways. The most northerly is an easterly and westerly road known as the Orange Turnpike, which crosses the Germania Road close to the point of intersection of the latter with the road of Ely's Ford. Due south and parallel with the Orange Turnpike are two other roads known as the Orange Plank Road and the Carpathen Road. These roads lie about three miles apart from each other; the Orange Plank Road leading direct from the Orange Court House to Chancellorsville, and crossing the Brock Road near the junction with the Germania Road; the other, the Carpathen Road branching off from the

Orange Plank Road some five miles east of Orange Court House, and leading in a southeasterly direction to Spottsylvania Court House.

Spottsylvania County, in which the Wilderness is mainly located, was little more than a great battlefield, for here were fought four of the great battles of the war—Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, the Wilderness, and Spottsylvania Court House. It had become in a way a sort of national cemetery for the soldiers of the North and South. So much then for the battleground. And now a word as to commanders who are to measure strength for the first time within its grim and darkened forest depths.

The "Man of Destiny" was appointed to the command of all the armies on the 12th of March, 1864. Soon after his appointment he took up his headquarters with the army of the Potomac at Culpepper Court House. He had under him at this time the reorganized Second, Fifth and Sixth Corps of the Army of the Potomac, together with the independent Ninth Corps and the cavalry. In addition to these, he commanded all the armies of the Union, consisting of twenty-one army corps, located in eighteen military districts aggregating one million men. In all purely military questions, his will was supreme and his authority unquestioned.

By retaining Meade in the immediate command of the army of the Potomac, he had avoided wounding the self-love of the army. In this he showed deep insight into the hearts of his men who were the more willing for this action on his part to serve him at all times with supreme zeal and devotion.

The grand divisions of Burnside's day had disappeared and in their places had come four infantry corps and one of cavalry. These were the Second Corps commanded by Hancock, the Fifth by Warren, the Sixth by Sedgwick and the Ninth by Burnside, while the cavalry was under the command of Sheridan. The old First and Third Corps had been disbanded and divided up between the Second and Fifth.

Reading over the successive rosters, it is evident that the army of the Potomac had greatly changed since its organization by McClellan in 1862. The latter had resigned, Hooker was with Sherman, Mansfield, Reno, Kearney, Stevens and Reynolds had fallen in battle, Sumner was dead, Sickles disabled from wounds, Porter cashiered, Newton, Butterfield, Howard, Slocum, Kilpatrick and Franklin ordered to active duty in the West, while McDowell, Doubleday, Sykes, Keyes, Stoneman, Pleasanton and Couch were assigned to departments where no great martial activity was required. Of those officers who attained prominence in the early days of its existence only Burnside, Meade, Hancock, Sedgwick, Wadsworth and Griffin of the Line, Warren of the Engineers, Hunt of the Artillery and Seth Williams, Ingalls and Humphreys of the Staff, were left. In the place of the "Old Guard" had sprung up a new set of leaders, chief among whom were Meade, Hancock, Sedgwick, Warren, Griffin, Getty, Birney, Barlow, Upton, Hays and Carroll. To these should be added Sheridan, who had been called from the West to the chief command of the cavalry, and his able lieutenants Torbert, Merritt, Gregg and Wilson.

To most of the higher officers of the Army of the Potomac, the new commander was a complete stranger. Of these none had ever served under him in the West save Sheridan, Ingalls and some half score of the regimental commanders. He had served in Mexico with Meade, Burnside, Sedgwick, Hancock, Hunt, Getty, Griffin, Wright, Ingalls and Hays. He had spent one or more years at the academy with Sedgwick, Wright, Hancock, Getty, Ingalls, Williams and Hays. The only West Pointers under his immediate command either as corps, division or brigade commanders or in high positions in other branches of the service, were Meade, Hancock, Sedgwick, Warren, Burnside, Hunt, Williams, Ingalls, Sheridan, Humphreys, Gibbon, Ayres, Neil, Wright, Eustis, Ricketts, Hays and Upton.

Lee, his great antagonist, had graduated from West Point in the class of 1829. Of the opposing corps division brigade commanders whom he had known at West Point, were Longstreet, Jones, M. L. Smith, Anderson and Wilcox. Besides these, Lee had under him the following regulars, all graduates of the Military Academy: A. P. Hill, Ewell, J. E. B. Stuart, Early, Anderson, Johnson, Rodes, Ramseur, Heth, Field, Kershaw, Geo. H. Steuart, Pendleton and Fitzhugh Lee.

Nothing illustrates so well the saddest feature of the conflict that was being waged—a war between men of common blood, institutions and traditions—than the close relationship that had once existed between leading officers in the two opposing armies. Sedgwick, the veteran commander of the Sixth Corps of the army of the Potomac, had been for four years a

classmate of Jubal Early at West Point. The former's division commander Getty, had graduated at the same institution with "Dick" Ewell, the commander of his Second Corps. A. P. Hill in the Wilderness campaign, found opposed to him Burnside, Griffin, Wilcox and Ayres, all members of the West Point class of '47. Seth Williams, the Adjutant-General of the Northern army, had been a great crony of Longstreet during their four years together at the academy. Sheridan and Stuart, the two great cavalry leaders of the two armies, had spent three years together there. And so the list might be continued if space but permitted.

And now a word as to the commanders of the opposing armies which lay on the opposite sides of the Rapidan in the spring of '64. Both were graduates of the first military school in the world. Lee, from the class of '29, his opponent from that of '43. Each had acquired his first experience in actual warfare under excellent masters in the war with Mexico. There they had not only had the great opportunity of observing and participating in the superb campaigns of both Scott and Taylor, but had been brought in contact with nearly all of these, who afterwards obtained prominence in the Civil War. These embraced Halleck, Meade, McClellan, Jackson, the two Johnstons, Beauregard, Bragg, Longstreet, Pemberton, Thomas, McDowell, Hooker, Pope, Burnside, the two Hills, Hancock, Ewell, Sedgwick, all of which was of great value in after years.

Lee as the older officer and a brilliant engineer as well as a prime favorite of Scott, came out with greater

honor than the younger man. When the war opened Lee's standing and reputation were such that he could unquestionably have had the command of the Federal forces from the very outset had he so desired. It would have been a great temptation for an officer and it speaks well for his character and probity, that his convictions—mistaken though they were—forbade his acceptance of it.

The younger man meanwhile had been completely lost sight of after his resignation from the army, and no one thought for an instant of recommending him for a high position.

In the opening months of the war Lee's career was anything but promising. After an unsuccessful campaign in West Virginia, where he was invariably pitted against inferior commanders, he was exiled to the South Carolina Coast. There he remained until the disability of Johnston at Fair Oaks on the 31st of May, 1862, brought the appointment to himself. The Northern general meanwhile had repeatedly brought himself into prominence by his success at the West. His handling of his regiment in Missouri, his display of executive ability when he, as a Brigadier-General, commanded the Cairo District, his prompt seizure of Paducah, the complete success of his attempt at Belmont to keep Polk from sending reinforcements to Price in Missouri, all had tended to bring him into prominence as the ablest brigadier in the West. Then came the first great success of the war at Fort Donelson, where the name of the victor was on every one's lips. With that victory gained, his career was thereafter certain to com-

mand the attention of the Washington Government. From that time he became a national leader. At Shiloh he displayed to superb advantage, those great traits which gave promise of the greatness of the man's inborn pugnacity, calmness amid apparent disaster, indomitable perseverance and absolute unwillingness to submit to defeat. After Shiloh his career in the West, and Lee's in the East were the ones of almost unvarying and at times brilliant success. As against the Northern leader's success at Iuka and Corinth, the other could point to that of Manassas and Chantilly.

As against his opponent's victories at Champion Hill, Black River, Bridge, Raymond, Jackson and Vicksburg, Lee could point to Mechanicsville, Gaines Mill, Fraziers Farm, Savages Station, Harrison Landing and Malvern Hill. Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville are offset by Lookout Mountain and Missionary Ridge. Antietam and Gettysburg constitute the roll of Lee's only defeats, while the Northern commander had yet to meet his first defeat. Neither had ever commanded as a subordinate in battle.

For the first time in his life the newly appointed Lieutenant-General was called upon to command an army composed almost exclusively of Eastern troops. At Vicksburg he had but few brigades from that section, while at Chattanooga he had under his command Hooker's entire corps from the army of the Potomac. There was a difference, real and not imaginary, between the character of the troops from the East and West. The army of the Potomac, in the majority of cases, had been recruited either from the large cities of the East or

else from the stores, offices and workshops of New England and the Middle States. With some few exceptions, the army of the Potomac had neither the physique, nor the early experience with firearms possessed either by their opponents or by their own comrades from the great Middle West. These latter were mostly gathered from the farms or small localities of that section. They were inured to hardship in a new and unsettled country. The world has never seen better soldiers than the troops that fought at Donelson, Shiloh, Vicksburg, Chattanooga, and in the battles around Atlanta. Outside of the defeat sustained at Chickamauga they had never met with a serious reverse. In the east the experience of the army of the Potomac and other Eastern armies which were from time to time organized, was in the early part of the war very different. One defeat followed another, until it seemed as if nothing but disaster followed in their track. Discouragement arose more from lack of confidence in their leaders than from the defeat sustained. As to the soldiers themselves they had had so many disappointments with other commanders, that there was at the start very little enthusiasm aroused among them when they heard of the Western general's appointment to the supreme command. They simply said among themselves:

"Well, let him see what he can accomplish with this army of the Potomac. He cannot be worse than his predecessors, and if he is a fighter he can find all the fighting he wants. Whatever other faults Lee's army may have, it is not afraid to fight."

The time when pitched battles were fought once or twice a year and when men killed each other all day long according to eminent precedent and then relapsed into elegant repose and amity, was about to pass away. The army of the Potomac hitherto had seemed to fight battles merely for the purpose of sacrificing a certain number of men in order that a temporary period of peace might follow. Only in one man's mind had come the fixed determination not only to defeat but to destroy the opposing army. This had been that one's task almost from first to last. At Donelson he not only defeated Buckner's army, but captured it. At Vicksburg he made the largest capture of prisoners ever made in war in modern times and truly destroyed a great army. At Chattanooga he broke forever the effectiveness of Bragg's army. And now he was to enter upon the greatest task of all, the defeat and destruction of Lee's hitherto invincible host.

From the time the conqueror of Vicksburg took command of the Potomac in person, Lee never exposed his flanks or moved around in reckless disregard of results. He then began a series of movements, a studied inspection of position and operated with a care that was new to him. Up to this time Lee had been willing to undertake almost any risk and would push his troops under fire almost to the limit of endurance.

With the one exception of sending Early to attack Washington in the Fall of 1864, there was no more detaching the corps or divisions to go to other places. Thus at Bull Run, Johnston had placed his troops on cars and helped Beauregard win his victory on the

Chickahominy. So after Fredericksburg Lee had sent Longstreet to lay siege to Suffolk, and again after Gettysburg, he had sent him to Bragg's assistance at Chattanooga.

The great strategy on the board of war was about to commence. The two real masters in the art of war were now to play the game to its very end. The lesser lights had had their day. Now was to come the supreme test. Back of the Northern commander stood Paducah, Belmont, Henry, Donelson, Shiloh, Iuka, Corinth, Vicksburg, and Missionary Ridge. Back of the Southern chieftain stood Greenbrier, Oak Grove, Mechanicsville, Gaines Mills, Savages Station, Glendale, Malvern Hill, Groveton, Antietam, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg and Mine Run. He had never been defeated on Virginia soil. As against this marvelous chain of victories his opponent had met and vanquished at one time or another, each of the other leaders of the Confederacy—Cheatham, Pillow, Buckner, Forrest, Albert Sidney Johnston, Beauregard, Van Horn, Price, Pemberton, Joe Johnston, Hood, Hardee, Cleburne and Bragg. Lee had met and either vanquished or baffled, Reynolds, Pope, McClellan, Burnside, Hooker and Meade.

When the silent commander took up this stupendous task of commanding the armies, he saw clearly the difficulties he would be called upon to meet, not only from the enemy, but from the ranks of his own army. He knew only too well that for two years the army of the Potomac had been torn with heart burnings on the part of rival cliques and jealous officers. He knew

that if he were to succeed in the gigantic task that had been given him to accomplish he must put an end to all this. To most of the officers he was personally unknown. On the part of some there was an evinced and none too well concealed desire to depreciate the worth of his victories already gained—unparalleled though they might have been in history—by asserting that the new commander had never yet been called upon to meet the idol of the Confederacy. At the outset he was successful in overcoming any jealousy that might have arisen, through the medium of his unobtrusive manners and the entire absence in his make-up, of unworthy personal ambition. Whatever his subordinates thought of one another they were at all times well disposed toward him and perfectly loyal to their chief.

And now while preparations for the great campaign are going on at the headquarters of the army of the Potomac at Culpepper Court House, the leaders of the opposing armies are by no means idle. On the morning of the second of May the Confederate chieftain and his lieutenants, met in a council of war on Clark Mountain to discuss the new leader who was to lead their old antagonist—the army of the Potomac—once more against them. The group gathered there that day are all trained soldiers, graduates of the great national academy of West Point. There is Longstreet—"Old Pete," as he is called—the hardest fighter in the army. In battle he has the spring of a tiger and the grip of a bulldog. Contrary to general belief, it is to him and not to Jackson, belongs the distinction of being the most rapid marcher the confederacy has produced. He

was always on time. He is unquestionably—now that Jackson has gone—the ablest lieutenant of Robert E. Lee, and as an aggressive all round fighter he has no equal in the Southern army. Truly the first corps in the army of Virginia is under superb leadership. Ewell, the commander of Jackson's old second corps, had been selected for that position by "Stonewall" himself, after the latter fell wounded at Chancellorsville. He was always plain "Dick" Ewell, a soldier by profession. He was not quick in his perceptions and could execute better than he could plan. He did not possess in a high degree the activity of mind necessary to provide for all the exigencies of military operations.

A. P. Hill, the commander of the third corps, better known as the "Light Division," had, with the possible exception of "Jeb." Stuart, the brightest mind of any of Lee's corps commanders. His perceptive powers were great, his judgment unexcelled and his skill in handling troops under fire above the ordinary. He was reserved and wary, in all respects a most capable and efficient lieutenant for the great soldier under whom he served.

"Jeb." Stuart, the cavalier of the army, was one of the greatest cavalry officers. Without possessing the strategic and tactical abilities of his great opponent, Sheridan, he rivalled the latter in his power over his followers. His personal magnetism was extraordinary, while his absolute fearlessness in battle gave him the affection and confidence of his soldiers. He was the beau-ideal of a soldier of fortune—a gay "sabreur." He was beyond question the most picturesque figure to

be found in either army, North or South. His faults lay in his hasty temper and his unquenchable thirst for glory.

Such, in brief, are the pen pictures of the great lieutenants of the army of Virginia as they were in the month of May, 1864. And now, what of the commander? Robert E. Lee was at the opening of the Wilderness campaign, fifty-nine years of age. He was almost too old for active service in the field. Possessing neither imagination nor humor, retiring and exclusive in his manners, he was ever the dignified self-possessed Virginian of education and refinement.

Possessing wealth and the highest position, he had that pride of race which is not wholly without its charms. He was a slave-holder, with all that term implies. He was the idol of Virginia, and had the confidence of the confederate government and of the entire southern people to an unparalleled extent. In addition to this, the high opinion in which he was held in the South was shared to no inconsiderable degree by a large portion of those at the North. He was austere in manner and had, you might say, no intimates. His military abilities, particularly in the line of defense, were of the highest order. He was, however, greater as a strategist than as a tactician. By nature, he was aggressive, but his education and training as an engineer had a tendency to cause him to cultivate the art of defense rather than offense. It was in the selection and fortifying of lines on which to receive attack rather than to deliver it, that he displayed his extraordinary abilities. He was at all times wonderfully acute and possessed intuitive

powers of a high order, which enabled him to grasp clearly the character of those opposed to him. Duty and loyalty to his state were his pride—we would almost say religion. Nor was this to be wondered at. The present generation finds it difficult to realize the commanding position occupied by the Old Dominion at the opening of the war. In all parts of the country there was a certain tenderness and veneration felt towards her that did not exist towards any other state, and yet it was the Nazareth of slavery.

All the group here described were talking, that bright May morning, of the "Man of Destiny." Lee looks the great master of war that he is. Tall in stature, with a figure trim as youth, notwithstanding his years, white hair and benevolent features, teeth of ivory whiteness, mouth handsome and impressive, nose and chin full and regular, all give to his face force and character. Hill, a vial of intense energy, strikes his clenched fists, when the opening of this campaign is mentioned, and seems to say: "If this new enemy can be beaten, the thing can be done by my troops." Ewell declares his willingness to carry out to the letter any orders that may be given him. Only Longstreet, usually the most outspoken and aggressive of them all, remains silent. This is noticed by his chief, who presently inquires of him, "General, what do you think of this new commander those people over there [pointing in the direction of Culpepper] are about to send against us?"

"I have known him for twenty years," replies Longstreet, "and he is the only officer of the Northern army who seems to understand that we Southerners are mad

clear through and through, and that we can never be whipped until they have destroyed our armies, or starved us into submission. But those of you that think that he is of a piece with the other generals that the North have sent against us will learn your mistake the very first day we line up against him in battle. I was with him at West Point, and fought beside him in the Fourth Infantry during the Mexican War, and I know him through and through. As soon as he gets fairly started, we shall feel the need of all the sunshine and gayety that can be found, for let me tell you that he will allow the boys in gray, from this time on, a mighty short period of relaxation or amusement. No matter what we do, mark my words, he will contrive to move and always in our direction. He is the most persistent and aggressive fighter I ever knew. If he once breaks through our lines, we might as well go to Washington and there, going down on our knees to Father Abraham, say, 'Father we have sinned.' "

Who was this unassuming man from the boundless West, who but three years before had been called—even by his friends—a failure? What was he and what did he represent? In achieving, in the space of two years, the supreme command of an army of one million men and a military command already equal to the greatest the world had ever seen, had he lost any of those moral qualities which distinguished him as youth and man? The character of the "Man of Destiny" was unique. On the surface lay great moral qualities—integrity, sincerity and rugged love of truth and justice. He never deceived himself or his friends. He never underrated

himself in battle or overrated himself in reports. He never arrogated to himself credit that belonged to another, nor was he ever known to shirk responsibility by placing it upon the shoulders of others, when it suited his purpose to do so, for he had that high moral courage, so rarely found among men, which assumes responsibility and stands back of it whatever happens. His courage, both physical and moral, was marvellous. He had perfect self-control, whether in the stress of battle or when chided by his superiors and under the stigma of unmerited disgrace. To many it seemed that he needed the shadows to bring out the inward greatness of his character. He was calm amid excitement and patient under trials. He never lost his temper, and in times of most intense excitement rarely raised his voice. He could discipline himself as well as others, but never publicly criticized any. He did not deem it necessary, in order to have a well-disciplined army, to have an unhappy one. He was abashed in no man's presence. He was never on exhibition and was wholly without small talk. His most marked characteristic as a commander were his matchless persistency, superb and unhesitant action, perfect mastery of details, considerateness in the treatment of subordinates, courage to assume responsibility. He was just to all, absolutely loyal and had the capacity to do, in the heat and tumult of war, things so conspicuously right that every one wondered that they had not been thought of before. In battle the calm of the man was broken. There his utterances were prompt and incisive. His ideas were rapid, his judgment decisive. The words he uttered were those of com-

mand. No other man of like disposition possessed such great powers which lay dormant in times of peace but arose to action when called by the stress of great emergencies. He was created for such as these. He grasped at once the main features as well as the minutest details. He kept this ceaseless activity in complete control and made the difficult and complicated machinery work efficiently and humanely toward the one great goal.

Sheridan had stated the matter well: "I can map out a dozen campaigns, every one of which Sherman would swear that he could fight out to victory, but neither he nor I could tell which was the best plan, but the 'Chief' would and could tell the reason for it."

To him was now entrusted the stupendous task of making Robert E. Lee write with his own hand the word "surrender" after his great career. It is only the magnitude of a great task which can call forth the powers that master it. With the advent of the "Man of Destiny" passed away the evil day when political instead of military ideas control the selection of commanders. He knew only too well that none of the great commanders of the old world could ever hope to reach the supreme place under the changed condition of the new. He alone had evolved the strategic principle, that armies, not cities or states, must be the real object of a truly successful campaign.

He grasped, too, the fact that one who would be a truly great commander must understand his position thoroughly and know well the troops and the qualities of the armies opposed to him, and the capacity of the

leader. He must know, too, how to husband his own resources, and to discern those of the enemy; must be quick to know how and when to fight, and to distinguish between what is essential and what is of only trifling importance. He realized that breadth of plan is oftentimes neutralized by neglect of detail. Like Lee, he always studied his adversary. His own methods no one could foretell. He varied them according to who was opposed to him.

His characteristics in times of battle were these: He had a way of putting one line immediately opposite the other, to occupy it while he formed a second line a mile in the rear, which would then extend beyond the first. This he would throw forward, so as to envelop the enemy's flanks. He never succeeded in winning the affection of his soldiers, as did Lee, but he only needed to command them in one battle in order to win their supreme confidence. He possessed, to a wonderful degree, the power of doing everything at once. He was a master hand at feeding a fight. His judgment was nearly perfect and his execution as complete as could be expected with tools he had in hand. His combativeness never turned in the direction of his brother officers, but always towards the enemy. With the arrival of the month of May he was ready for the great campaign. Sherman was to move on Johnston, Banks up the Red River, and Butler against Richmond south of the James. Sigel was to move up the Shenandoah and Averell into West Virginia. Not a commander in history, Napoleon not excepted, understood better the nature of his task than did the Federal leader in

the spring of 1864. His line of battle was nearly a thousand miles long. He who had handled his company with so much trepidation at Palo Alto, nearly twenty years before, was now called upon to plan the movements of a body of soldiers numbering close to a million. Most of his subordinates he knew well and truly. Only the men in the army of the Potomac were unknown to him. His orders ran through the various armies like an electric current.

When the campaign opened the Army of the Potomac left its winter headquarters at Culpepper and started for the fords of the Rapidan. On that day the one whose hand had ordered that movement rode a fine but small black horse, and was accompanied by his staff. His uniform coat was unbuttoned. He wore plain top boots reaching to his knees. He carried no sword whatever. On his shoulders he bore the three stars which he alone, of all the generals of the army, was entitled to wear.

The day was perfect, clear and cool. The dogwood was just beginning to bloom. The foliage along the rivulets that they crossed on the way was just beginning to show the first verdure of spring. The limbs overhanging the streams were bursting into bloom. The troops greeted their new commander with lusty cheers as he rode along. It was not his intention, by any means, that a battle should take place within the Wilderness between the two armies, for he knew only too well the advantage would lie with his antagonist under such conditions, for no locality could be found with worse facilities for resisting an assault than this

region of thick woods, rough underbush and few roads. This for the reason that the enemy could easily concentrate as large a force as could be massed within such narrow limits, while the one defending must be limited in the number of its defenders by the situation of the ground. Again, it offered but little opportunity for the use of artillery, with which the Army of the Potomac was particularly well equipped. As for the cavalry, the underbush was so thick that it could only move along a few beaten roads that traversed the Wilderness. Confusion must inevitably result should a battle take place under such conditions.

The troops moved off with a quick, elastic step, and were brimful of enthusiasm. Before the order to march was given there existed throughout the north that awful quiet which always precedes the storm of impending crisis. The people realized that the final struggle was at hand.

There was an ominous hush on that May morning, in 1864, when the advance of the great army took up its march toward the Rapidan. All were moving at the command of one whose lips never gave utterance to an indiscreet word, whose plans even those high in authority did not know and could not divine. And Lee, almost as silent as his opponent, was waiting on the opposite bank of the historic river for the attack. He, like his great antagonist, had stripped for the last fight. If he were not beaten now, his final success was sure. The man from the Golden West was truly the nation's last hope. The government had made the last throw on

the chessboard of war. All is now ready for the great battle which is to follow so soon.

It was a brilliant scene that met the eye, as regiment after regiment filed out of the camps, with flags streaming in the breeze, arms glimmering in the sunlight, and guidons unfurled. Stirring bugle notes awoke the ghosts of the forest, cheer after cheer went up from the brave hearts that soon were to stop forever, beneath the shadow of the Wilderness.

The fifth corps crossed the Rapidan at Ely's Ford, and bivouacked there for the night, near the Wilderness Tavern. The scene there that night was picturesque in the extreme. Fires had been lighted by the roadside, and the whole sky was lighted up by their glare. Hancock's corps camped that night at Chancellorsville, on the old battlefield. Barlow's division marched along the road in the gathering darkness, singing "John Brown's Body." No one present will forget the weird music of that night. They had asked all along for a man of action, and they now found that one had come. Already his power ran through the army like an electric current.

Then followed the memorable two-days battle of the Wilderness, with all its dramatic incidents and fearful carnage. The tangled undergrowth, the forest fires, and the difficulty of distinguishing friend from foe, all combined to make it the most spectacular, as it was the most decisive battle of the war. With the close of the fighting on the afternoon of the second day, it appeared to most of the Northern corps and division commanders

that the battle was over. In this belief, there was error of the gravest nature.

For on the evening of the second day came one of the most trying moments in all the story of this strange battle. Sedgwick's troops, tired and sore with the long battle, had encamped for the night. Evening shadows had fallen so fast in the gloomy recesses of the forest that this had prevented any true alignment along the front of the Southern sixth corps. At this time Gordon, the "Chevalier Bayard" of the southern army, obtained permission from Early to allow him to make his famous night attack in the Wilderness. Suddenly the woods in front of Seymour's and Shaler's brigades were lighted up by a volley of musketry. Through the darkened woods came a stream of leaden missiles. Notwithstanding that night had wrapped the gloomy woods in darkness, the roar of the battle rose higher. It lighted up the forest depths with an unearthly light. Just at this time, there came aides galloping to the Federal commander's headquarters, evidently laboring under intense excitement. Their reports were indeed disheartening.

One said that Ferrero's division had been cut off and forced back upon the Rapidan; that both Sedgwick and Wright had been captured, and that Shaler's and Seymour's brigades had been made prisoners. Such tales of disaster as they told would have been enough to inspire apprehension in the hours of daylight, and in the darkness of the night, in the depths of the forest and after a man's nerves had been racked by the strain of

the two days' desperate battle, the most immovable commander might well have been shaken.

But nothing seemed to disturb the perfect poise of the one whose master-mind was directing the movements of the Army of the Potomac during these two days of battle. He remembered how he had cut his way out at Belmont when surrounded by the enemy. He recalled that dark hour which preceded the last charge at Donelson, which led him and his troops to victory. He had not forgotten those hours of carnage and confusion at Shiloh. He was not unconscious of the fact that his was that daring movement at Vicksburg when, cutting himself loose from his base of supplies, he placed himself between the southern commanders, Johnston and Pemberton, fighting and whipping each in turn. He had ended by capturing an army. He well knew that to him alone was due the fact that victory had been gained from what seemed like almost certain defeat at Missionary Ridge and Lookout Mountain. There was on his face that night that look which only appeared on his face in moments of supreme peril. His staff and the old-time leaders of that veteran army gazed at him that night with a feeling of awe that they made no attempt to conceal.

Without the change of a muscle or the slightest alteration of the tones of his voice, he quickly interrogated the officers who brought the reports. Then, quietly and without the slightest excitement, he gave with the rapidity of lightning the necessary orders. Reinforcements were hurried to the points of attack and the confederates were soon forced back to their original posi-

tion. In one instance, at least, where one of his subordinates became too persistent in telling him what Lee was doing, he spoke these words of reprimand: "I am heartily tired of constantly hearing what Lee is going to do. Some of you seem to think that he is going to perform a miracle and at the same time attack our front rank and our rear and on both of our flanks. Go back to your command and think what you are going to do yourself instead of always worrying over what Lee is going to do."

And so night fell, and the great army is given time to think. There was a strange weight in the hearts of all. It was not solely because old things had passed away and old leaders departed. In the sundering of old ties there is always a strain, and there is anxiety felt as to what the new ties will bring. It was not victory alone for which this army was fighting. It looked to a cause, to the end. They pondered well on the worth and cost of it all and what the end might unfold, of which this was the beginning. Some of the soldiers grouped themselves into little squads against the gloomy tree trunks, near the fires. Others stretched themselves on the ground moistened by the dews of the night and the blood of the slain, and there they spoke in whispers, almost with awe.

They wondered what the man of iron would do next. Had the victorious star in the West come East only to sink there below the horizon? The future alone could tell. And as the stars shone out of the clear sky and shed their light over the shadows of the Wilderness, there came to them the thought that above this field of

carnage, above the sky and above those twinkling stars, was the all-merciful Father who held in the hollow of His hand the outcome of this great conflict.

The battle of the Wilderness, it is true, was understood least of all by the soldiers who fought in it on either side. Years must elapse before it is understood aright, and yet there were some things they did realize. In place of the pomp of war had come this last death-grapple in the Wilderness. Under their new commander they felt that the army had become a machine, endowed with intellect, and knowing that only by the shedding of the blood was the reward of the nation's salvation to be obtained. It knew that the sanguinary contests of the past had never been fought to full fruition, and that from henceforth they would be. It knew its own temper. It knew that the great leader so long sought for had been found. It felt sure that under his leadership, with all his fearful aggressiveness, no more lives would be lost in battle than had been wasted by disease in the past. It felt that from now on it could do and dare everything under its new leader, for through him must come the country's salvation.

While some of the features of the battle of the Wilderness are to be found in other engagements, no battle ever took place on such ground. For two days two hundred thousand veteran troops had struggled in a death-grapple, confronted at each step by almost every obstacle by which nature could bar their way, through tangled forest, the impenetrable gloom of which could be likened only to the valley of the shadow of death. The undergrowth stayed their progress. The branches

overhead shut out the light from the heaven. Officers could scarcely see their troops for any considerable distance, for smoke clouded their vision and shut out the light of the sun. It was a battle fought with ear and not with eye. The circumstances seemed to combine to make the scene one of unutterable horror. At times the wind howled through the trees, mingling its moans with the groans of the dying. Heavy branches were cut off by the fierce fire of the musketry and fell crashing upon the heads of the men, adding a new turn to the battle. Forest fires raged. Ammunition trains exploded. The dead were roasted in the conflagration. The wounded, aroused by its heated breath, dragged themselves along with torn and mangled limbs in mad energy of despair to escape the ravages of the flames. It was as though Christian men had turned fiends and hell itself had usurped the place of earth. Few of the movements could be seen, and the progress of the battle was known to the senses chiefly by the rising and falling sounds of the musketry that swept along the line of battle miles in length, sounds which at times approached the sublime. All this, that there might be written in the Constitution of the United States the abolition of slavery, that it might be known to all men that we were a Union, and not a confederation of states.

And still, after the battle the revelry at the rebel capital grew louder. Only the commander on the field saw then for the first time the handwriting on the wall. From the day of the Wilderness, Lee, though he never confessed it, must have known that he was leading a

hopeless cause. The iron had entered his soul there for the first time.

And what of the morrow? It was whispered that night, around the camp-fires of the Army of the Potomac, that if the "Man of Destiny" turned North when the army moved out of the Wilderness, the future of the republic would be torn by the shadow of permanent disunion, but if he should turn South they all felt that it would be the beginning of the end. And what was the "Man of Destiny" doing at this hour—he who had dared to contest for supremacy with the great leader of the confederacy? He was sitting, at that moment, alone by the camp-fire, his hat low over his face, buried in thought. He was haggard and worn, but he was relentless. There came into his face that night the old resolute look which his fellow-cadets had seen that memorable day at West Point when in the riding academy he had ridden "York" to victory.

And while he sat there, there came a messenger bringing him tidings that Benedict, his well-beloved aide, lay dying on the field of battle, and wished to speak with him before he died. Without a moment's delay, he hastened to the bedside of his dying friend.

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE BLOOD ATONEMENT

It was the night of the second day's battle of the Wilderness. The sound of the mighty conflict had died away. The awful carnage of the fateful day was over. A temporary peace, such as it was, had settled over the two armies that only a few hours before had been locked in a death-grapple. The first lull in the greatest campaign in American history had come after long hours of conflict. Silence—broken only by the cries and moans of the wounded—brooded over the battlefield.

At a point just outside the federal lines, near the spot where Gordon had made his fierce night attack, lay John Benedict, himself a victim of the successful attempt to drive back the intrepid southern leader and his valiant troopers. He had lain there for two long hours, with his life blood slowly ebbing away, but too sorely wounded to be moved. He was alone now, his only companion, his orderly (who had found him wounded on the battlefield and had done for him all that could be done under such circumstances), having a short time before gone, at the wounded man's earnest direction, to headquarters with the request that if possible the federal

commander might come to him a moment before he died. Now footsteps might have been heard approaching, and suddenly there appeared under the bright starlight, the figure of the orderly, followed by the familiar form of the "silent soldier." The orderly led the way to where the staff officer lay, with his life now all but spent. The federal chieftain approached his side, and, leaning over him, gazed into his face and spoke.

"Benedict, do you know me?"

A smile played round the lips of the stricken man, as he replied, in a voice that was weak and low: "Yes, General. It was indeed good of you to come."

Then when the officer attempted to utter some word of hope and encouragement, he interrupted him by saying:

"No, my last hour is at hand, and it finds me where I have always hoped and prayed that it would, wounded on the field of battle, while fighting, not for my country —for I have no right to claim it as such—but to wipe away in my own blood a stain left by one whose name I bear. My real name you have never known, and it was this which caused me to send for you to-night at such an hour. Humble though I am, the message which I send through you to-night is not to friends or kin, but is for the nation; both those in your own army and those from whom I received my wounds.

"General, they tell me—though I have never seen it myself—that at West Point, in one of the Academy buildings, there are a number of slabs on which are written in letters of gold the names of the Revolutionary heroes; that midway between two honored names printed

in gold letters, there appears a blank block. Above and below is shown the tips of gold letters, just enough to enable all who see it to know what it is intended to conceal. A block of marble set in transversely across the golden capitals has blotted out for all time, one name off the roll of American men of honor."

Here the voice of the wounded man grew husky. "That name is the one borne by my grandfather, and he was Benedict Arnold. I, sir, am John Benedict Arnold. You say, and rightly, that he was a traitor. That shame was not only his when he lived, but has followed his descendants even to the present hour. It has been handed down as a tradition in our family that he penciled on paper when he was dying, three words—'Remorse, remorse, remorse.' I believe that tradition to be founded on truth.

"Though I am an alien to you and the nation, I claim the right to regard it even as one of the nation's own sons. I love the Union for the grandeur of its past and present, but it seemed to me that all that has been gained in the past is imperilled by the present struggle. As a soldier I have grown to love that grand old flag of the great Republic as only one can love it who has fought under its banner, and regards it with a love which can only be measured by his willingness to die for it. Torn, riddled and bloodstained, the old flag is dearer to me than life itself. And, General, as I lie here with the shadow of death settling upon me, I feel the gift of prophecy strong within me. I have faith to believe that under your guidance the day is not far distant when this bitter war shall end. I know that when that

time comes those who are now fighting against the flag will shed tears that the cause for which they risked their lives should have been lost forever. I think it will not be long before they will see that God was kinder to them than they were to themselves, and that it was His fixed purpose that the Union should be preserved. Then at least they will realize that it has come to stay, and that no power of men can overthrow it. That you and your supporters are fighting to save them from themselves.

"I have told you, in part, why I, a stranger in this land, enlisted in the armies of the Union. It was in part to do what I could to wipe out the obloquy that attached itself to the name of one who was false to the trust that was placed in his hands, and yet, that was not all. I wanted to be with you, and to fight at your side. I have seen you pass through the shadows and dark places of life, and I wanted to be near you when cheered by the sunshine of success, you attained to the highest and best. But it is not to be. My race is nearly run. With it all I am content."

As the stricken soldier spoke these words, Burton realized that there was not a false note in Benedict's character. He had nothing to regret when the time came to give up his life. Ah, true it is that to spend and be spent is the fate of the soldier. That when men like John Benedict pass away, much of the treasured sunshine of the world vanishes with them. How true it was then, when the conflict came, that such men as he who had no part in the causes which led to it, laid down their lives with a smile, while many a one who had done

his best to precipitate the struggle never went to the front.

And now the commander speaks: "Benedict, in the years to come our country will be proud of the fact that she had service from such a man as you, and will grieve that she has lost you, and prayers will be offered that she may have more like you. True it is that we must all die, sooner or later, and the man is indeed happy who meets death in the discharge of duty. This may be your fate. If so, remember that you have done your duty, and the consciousness of that, for a soldier, robs death of all its terrors."

These words of the commander were indeed grateful to the soul of him to whom they were spoken. His eyes brightened and a beautiful smile flickered on his lips. And then he spoke once more.

"General, if, as you have often said, I have been of service to you in times past, I want to make a last request of you. I want to learn from your own lips before I drop into that last sleep from which there is no awakening, that when this great army moves, as it must do sooner or later, it will not be as it has been in times past, a retreat—but that instead, it will be a march forward in the direction of Richmond. Then—though I shall not live to see the end—I shall know that the Union will be finally preserved."

And as his eyes, glazed in death, looked into those of the great warrior—his one-time friend of the sailors' boarding-house in San Francisco—he heard these words:

"Benedict, the Army of the Potomac shall never re-

treat so long as I am in command. I promise you this."

And then, still kneeling at his side, the two men, no longer as chief and subordinate, but as friends who were to part forever, clasped hands for the last time. John Benedict spoke no more. The next evening at sunset, while the federal army still rested on the late field of battle, all that was mortal of the grandson of Benedict Arnold found its last resting place within the recesses of the Wilderness. And as the commander himself stood over the open grave, within which lay all that was mortal of his friend, he took the sword that he himself had given Benedict, broke it, and threw it into the opening. He looked downward and for a moment the tears rolled from his eyes. His thoughts then for a moment, unconsciously to himself, found utterance in these words:

"Poor Benedict, though an alien, he was a patriot of the patriots, pure in thought and deed, a man whose heart knew no guile. Be content, dear friend, faithful to God and man, your warfare is over, your crown is won. As for me, my battle is but just begun."

But hark! One hears now the low rat-tat of the last tattoo and the bugle-notes of the soldier's requiem. Good-night, brave soldier. Put out the lights. All's well.

No volleys were fired over the grave, and the soldiers merely wheeled into column and marched slowly away. A moment later the commander of the Army of the Potomac mounted his horse and rode away.

And did he keep his word of promise to the other? History answers "yes," for on the night of Benedict's

burial came the order to undertake the historic night march to Spottsylvania Court House. When the order was received by the troops a note of exultation ran through the ranks. "No more retreats for the patient men in the ranks. On to Richmond! Lee no longer commands the Army of the Potomac. We have a general of our own at last." Then, while cheers arose, regiment after regiment took up their arms and moved by the left flank on that great campaign which was to end only at Appomattox. And that night the "Man of Destiny" rode to Todd's Tavern, where he was to rest until morning, and his ride, lighted as it was by the torches carried by the marching troops, was one grand ovation. It assumed all the aspects of a triumphal march. Lee had made his last serious offensive move, and now in very truth had come the "beginning of the end."

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE SAVING OF A NATION

Spottsylvania and Cold Harbor followed the Wilderness in quick succession, and then there came those weeks of fearful tension, to both North and South, when all wondered what would be the next move on the great chessboard of war.

After the Wilderness, it was not Lee, but his great adversary, who assumed the offensive and maintained it to the end. It was at this time that the hitherto invincible leader of the Southern cause said to a friend, "A few more such campaigns as this and it will soon be ended just as I have feared it might end, from the first."

Unlike all the campaigns which had preceded it, the present one was not to capture Richmond, but to destroy Lee's army. No longer were notes of discord heard from the fighting editors, who never won a battle. Their scoffs at West Point science had long since ceased. For one was now in command who had mastered that great secret of military success—the knowledge when to offer or accept battles, when to refrain or decline. For two days Lee neither knew nor could learn where his adversary had gone. He had disap-

peared as if by magic. Then he awoke to the knowledge that in his very face the enemy had crossed a difficult river and was now on the south side of the James. Then it was that Lincoln telegraphed: "I begin to see it now. You will succeed. God bless you all."

And his words were indeed prophetic. By the close of 1864, the "Man of Destiny" had accomplished wondrous results. Sherman, the great strategist and master of the tactics of war, was at Savannah, after his famous march from Atlanta to the sea. Sheridan, the irrepressible "rough rider" of his day, had annihilated Early's army. Hood's army had first been wounded to the death by Schofield at Franklin and then all but destroyed by Thomas at Nashville. Price had been driven out of Mississippi and Breckinridge had been taken in East Tennessee, and Fort Fisher and Wilmington had fallen. Candee had been successful in Louisiana, while the Army of the Potomac held Lee's army as if in a vise, in the trenches at Petersburg.

On March 28th, 1865, was held the historic conference on the River Queen, near City Point, on the James. There met not only the great war President and his lieutenant-general, but Sherman, Sheridan, Meade and Porter as well.

Finally came the last and successful assault on the lines at Petersburg, followed by the fierce struggle to reach Danville, and from there unite with Johnston's army. After the evacuation it was said that the confederate soldiers averaged one square meal and three fights a day. Lee's plan had been to give up Petersburg, thus cutting the federal general off from his base

of supplies, and then turn and deal him a crushing blow. The plan wholly failed. Instead Sheridan cut off Lee's retreat to Danville, and he was forced to fight or surrender. Game to the last, he chose the first of these alternatives. Then it was that Sheridan, though seldom at a loss to accept responsibilities, feeling the responsibility too great for him to bear alone, telegraphed his superior at Petersburg from his own headquarters at Farmville: "I wish you were here yourself."

That night his chief took that dramatic thirty-mile ride, through an enemy's country, accompanied only by his staff. It had all the lights and shadows of mediæval romance in it. As he approached the headquarters of the hero of Winchester, in the early hours of an April spring morning, the tired troopers woke up and sprang to their feet. Then the word was passed along the line: "The great chief is here himself. That means there will be relentless fighting on the morrow." Then from scores of throats rang out cheers for the one who had led them, through carnage and death, to this hour of expectant triumph. After supper on the eve of this day, April 7, 1865, there were loud cries for the Lieutenant-General as the troops marched by his temporary headquarters at Farmville, on their way to take part in the closing scenes of the great war drama, and when he appeared, an involuntary review was held there. Fires were lighted, and the enthusiasm of the hour was intense. But later that same night came the hour when action must take the place of the spectacular. The order must now be given which would determine whether Robert E. Lee would be compelled at last to

write the word "surrender" after his name. In many ways that night at Farmville was the greatest in the military life of the federal commander-in-chief. He was truly wonderful that night. He was at his greatest. His actions were prompt. His ideas rapid. His judgment decisive. He was absorbed, intent and relentless. With a force like granite he wrote the orders which were to transform a living issue into a "Lost Cause." His intimates, even those who, like Rankin, had known him since "cadet days," stood apart from him in awe that night. He was in truth the "Man of Destiny" set apart by an all-wise Providence to accomplish the "saving of a nation."

On the night of April 8th, Lee held his last council of war by the roadside near Appomattox. There were with him that night Longstreet, "Fitz" Lee and Gordon. Lee stood before a blazing fire, Longstreet sat on a log, while Gordon reclined on a pallet. Each in turn advised him that there was nothing for him to do on the following morn but to surrender the troops under his command.

And then came Appomattox. Nowhere did the "Silent Commander" stand out in such superb light as seen by the dying campfires that smoldered on the eve of that great ninth day of April, 1865. And then the day itself arrived in the glory of a bright sun and a cloudless sky. What did it all mean? No guns in position, with the enemy's columns so near! No preparation for action! A dreamy momentary sadness seemed to descend through that April air and change the scene. Silence so deep that the movements of the leaves in the

trees could be heard. There was nothing visible in front but that distant column standing behind its white flag. No band played. No charge was heard.

The contrast at Appomattox was most marked. The Northern commander was forty-three. His hair and full beard were nut-brown, without a trace of gray in them. He had on a single-breasted blouse of dark blue flannel, unbuttoned in front and showing a waistcoat underneath. He wore top boots without spurs. He was splattered with mud. His felt "sugar-loaf" stiff-brimmed hat was resting on his lap. His shoulder-straps alone told his rank. Lee, on the other hand, was six feet one, and fifty-nine years old. His hair and beard were silver-gray. In a new full-dress uniform he never looked more the ideal soldier than on the morn of Appomattox. Before another sun should set, the great ordeal of battle would be over.

Now the gray coat would be taken off for the last time and folded up and put away. There it will lie, a mute but eloquent emblem to generations yet unborn of the "Lost Cause" for which their fathers fought in vain. Of it it has been written: "It is rough, it is worn, it is tattered in places, but he loves it the more for the story it bears." Of the outcome of the surrender at Appomattox, it has been beautifully said:

"One cause, one God, one grave. Peace to them both. Green be the grass that waves over it and light the sod that is heaped above them.

"Let us have peace. Let the 'Blue' and the 'Gray' slumber side by side under the pines and cypresses, the live-oaks and the magnolias. The same flowers mantle

their dreamless beds, the same birds twitter above them, the same waters ripple at their feet."

There is probably no parallel in history to the refusal of the federal commander to ride as a conqueror through Richmond after the surrender at Appomattox. To a Napoleon the entrance to the besieged city would have seemed a fitting climax to great military success. To ride through its streets, with drums beating, flags flying, while the besieged inhabitants looked on with fear and dread, would have seemed to the soulless Corsican but the apotheosis of the culmination of a great campaign. And with the surrender of Appomattox, came many a reunion of the "Blue and the Gray." Some had been classmates together at West Point. It was at one of these gatherings around the campfires following the surrender that the valiant Longstreet affirmed that "he had never seen the old flag, even in the battle front, without tears in his eyes."

"I went into this war," he said, "believing that the cause for which I fought was just and would prevail. I have done the best I could as a soldier and shed bitter tears when the end came. Yet I believe I shall live long enough to see that God was kinder to us than we were to ourselves and that the Union should be preserved. At any rate, I am in it now to stay, and no power of man will draw me or mine out of it again."

The "Man of Appomattox" had now arisen to the very forefront of the world's greatest commanders. His name was always the harbinger of victory. He was the most aggressive soldier the world had ever seen. He never once yielded up a stronghold that he had wrested

from a foe. His moral qualities were the greatest of all. He was calm amid excitement, patient under trials, sure in judgment, clear in foresight, never depressed by reverses or unduly elated by success. He was always self-reliant. He was the "steadfast center about and on which everything else turned."

His greatest characteristics as a commander were measureless persistence, strength, perfect mastery of details, courage, justice to those under him and a capacity to do in the things so conspicuously right that every one wondered they had never been thought of before.

In thirteen months after his commission as Lieutenant-General was handed to him by President Lincoln, the war was ended.

And when the historian of the future comes to write of the great struggle, what will he write? On the page in letters time cannot efface will be written one name. His sword alone cut its way to final victory, his will alone brought the light of victory out of the fearful darkness of the night. Of whom do we speak, if not of him whose life-story is herein told? It is in truth the name of the "Man of Destiny."

CHAPTER XXXV

THE GRAND REVIEW

The morning of the 23d of May, 1865, broke clear and beautiful. The sun streamed down upon the Nation's capital with all the brilliancy of a perfect spring day. There are gathered together in Washington such an assembly as had never before been seen there. From the Atlantic to the Pacific the nation had stripped itself to send envoys to witness the passing of the veteran hosts through the gates of peace, to this mecca of all these years of conflict, their own beloved homes. The country, while yet quivering from the wound inflicted by the assassin's hand that bereaved it of the martyred Lincoln, had yet found both time and heart to welcome home the victors in a fratricidal war. This day and the one that followed it had been set aside for the grand review of the armies of the Republic, before they should be mustered out and scattered to their homes. Never had the city which bears the name of the father of his country seen a more imposing sight than this memorable return of the battle-scarred legions from camp and battlefield to the seat of the government. Each day the head of the marching column rested on "Capitol Hill." On the north end of the capitol itself, the scholars of

the public schools had taken their places. The boys, with their blue jackets decorated with rosettes, were located on the hill, while the girls, dressed in white with many-colored ribbons, were seated on the capitol steps.

A golden sun that day looked down on interminable lines of bristling bayonets and flashing sabres. The fiery cavalry steeds pranced to the well-known bugle notes, the long lines of infantry with burnished arms flashed in the sunlight, the thundering wheels of the heavy artillery wagons went clattering over the pavement. The assembled thousands watched with mingled feelings of joy and sadness the passing of those grizzled veterans beneath the torn and bullet-riddled emblems of the nation's strength and power. Joy at the thought of the living, the conquerors of victory; sadness in memory of the mute host of the absent comrades—those who had fallen that all this might be. Mothers, sisters and fathers watched for the passing son or brother. Fellow-townsmen looked with eager eye for the coming of their home company. Citizens of loyal commonwealths felt a thrill of just pride as there passed in perfect alignment before them some famous regiment which proudly bore the name of their beloved state. To-day it is the Army of the East, 200,000 strong, with their leaders, Meade, Parke, Griffin, Miles, Barlow, Mott, Merritt, Custer and the rest, who are passing in review before their beloved chief and the dignitaries of the nation. To-morrow it will be the careless, dare-devil hosts from the boundless golden west who will pass by with that same long swinging stride which carried them from "Atlanta to the Sea." They will have their true and tried leaders with

them, too. The matchless Sherman will be here then, with Logan, Howard, Blair, Slocum, Corse and Davies. Their veteran troops may not show the same discipline or perfect alignment as the proud victors of the Wilderness, Petersburg and Appomattox, but their banners are emblazoned with the magic names of Donelson, Shiloh, Vicksburg, Chattanooga, Atlanta, Nashville, Franklin and Savannah.

And what a review it was! That regiment there made the famous charge at Gettysburg. This one stood the brunt of the fierce attack of Chickamauga. That grizzled soldier there has marched from Belmont to Appomattox. That sleeve there has been empty since the wondrous charge up the heights of Lookout Mountain. Yonder a scar appears on that bronzed cheek in memory of that hour at Aldie when "Kilpatrick rode down in a whirlwind of death." That veteran limps still from Gordon's night attack in the Wilderness. That drummer boy yonder beat the rally on the river bank at Shiloh. That cavalryman yonder saw Stuart fall at Yellow Tavern. That regiment there marched with Sherman from Atlanta to the sea.

Yet even the strains of martial music attuned to express the joyous strains of victory were not able to drown the minor note that lay underneath it all. There was ever present the thought of those who had gone out in the full flush and vigor of manhood, and who now slept the sleep that knows no waking, on southern battlefields. As one pondered over the memory of these, every living man in that vast army seemed to be accompanied by shadows of the departed warriors. And for

the living—the actors in this great pageant that was passing before their eyes—there came the solemn thought that the grand army of the republic as an engine of fierce, implacable, fratricidal war, was passing out of mortal sight, into everlasting renown. But while these great armies are passing in review before the assembled thousands of their cheering fellow-countrymen, what of him whose genius alone had made all this triumphant review a reality? Where at this moment is he who hurled Lee with remorseless force from the Rapidan to the James, who shut him up in Petersburg and surrounded him with a cordon of steel, which he was destined to break, only to his own self-destruction? Where was he who had received, six weeks before, the surrender of the great confederate chieftain at Appomattox?

On the morning of the 23d of May, shortly before the hour of nine, two officers in military uniforms might have been seen leaving the headquarters of the commanding general of the United States army. Together, arm in arm, they walked slowly toward the reviewing-stand erected on Pennsylvania Avenue, immediately in front of the White House. The taller of the two was none other than "Dad" Rankin, erstwhile cadet at the Military Academy at West Point, with the class of '43, but now Quartermaster-General of the United States. His companion was a man of medium height, somewhat inclined to be stoop-shouldered, and he wore on his shoulders the three stars which he alone in all this great army of the Republic had the right to wear.

As the pair approached in sight of the reviewing-

stand, and saw the multitude that had assembled in that immediate vicinity even at this early hour, it brought forth this remark:

"General, when we were 'plebes' together at the 'Point,' did you ever think you would live to see a day like this?

"No, Dad, I did not. But I can remember at the time when I first saw General Scott at review there that although I realized that I could never resemble him in appearance, I had a presentiment for an instant that some day I should occupy his place on review."

Just at this moment they approached and ascended the reviewing-stand. Instantly such a deafening cheer went from the throats of the assembled thousands as was not surpassed in volume by any other on that day of unbounded enthusiasm. As the bearer of the "three stars" passed alone to take his seat, at the right of the President and next to Secretaries Stanton aad Speed, the people on the stand stood and cheered him.

And of what was "Dad" Rankin thinking, as he sat beside his chief that day and watched the men of regiment after regiment moved, as if by an irresistible impulse, swing their hats in the air and give three cheers for the great commander whose all-embracing genius had saved the nation? Then it was that there came to him the consciousness that to him had been vouchsafed the privilege of seeing the genesis of a great soul. He could trace it all now, in the light of a friendship that had lasted a quarter of a century. These were the successive steps as he had known them: First, the simple-hearted schoolboy, unconscious of his powers.

Next, the contestant in that memorable contest in the old riding academy, where he had tasted for the first time the sweets of victory. Then the severe ordeal of the Mexican War, that unrivalled school for military heroes. After this, the long years of eclipse, when his spirit had been chastened in the crucible of misfortune and disappointment. With the advent of the Civil War came that cry of anguish from the great heart of the loyal North, "Give us a leader." Then how, as if in answer to the prayer, there appeared out of the clouds of oblivion and the smoke of battle the face of the conqueror of Donelson, Shiloh, Vicksburg and Chattanooga. The nation then made her choice of leadership and there came that last year of never-ending conflict, the beginning of the end. He remembered how, amid the awful smoke and carnage of the Wilderness, the real soul of the man had appeared in all its Titanic grandeur before their eyes. They had stood awe-struck before the revelation. It had needed the stress of just such a moment—when the fate of a nation rested heavily on his shoulders—to show them what manner of man he was. From that hour they one and all rendered to him the tribute which was his alone. They might be jealous and there might be bickerings among themselves; they might have doubts as to the fitness of this man or that to command, but none of these even so much as touched the hem of his garments. He was so fair and just to all, high or low, so absolutely devoid of selfish ambition or lust for power, so willing to assume full responsibility under all circumstances, so self-reliant, so far above them all in moral strength

and in the genius of war that he passed unscathed, where others before him had stumbled and fallen. And finally there came the thoughts of Appomattox, and the scene enacted there. Here, at least, was a chance to find a flaw in the armor of his chief. Ah, no. Never had the greatness of the "Man of Destiny" shown out in clearer, truer light than on the day when he received the surrender of Lee.

Nor was the old classmate of the silent commander the only witness of his triumph that day, to whom the scene brought back memories of other days. Not far from the flag-draped stand where was the "Man of Destiny" with the President and his cabinet, and within plain sight of it, sat a heavily veiled woman, dressed in gray. She seemed to be so absorbed in the scene that was going on about her as to be oblivious of the presence of those friends whose guest she was on this occasion. Though she was in the crowd of northern enthusiasts, she was not of them, for she belonged to the bleeding and stricken South. Only the day before her husband had been imprisoned, together with the President of the late confederacy, in Fortress Monroe, and she had come thither to solicit the influence of friends to procure his release. It was none other than the wife of Carl Grimke Brett—one-time Senator in the Confederate Congress and more recently a brigadier-general in the southern army—who was sitting thus at the grand review. Drawn thither by an impulse she could not resist, she had accepted an invitation from friends which gave her an opportunity to see again, after all these years, the friend of her girlhood and youth, in

this hour of his supreme triumph. As she sat there unseen by him, and watched the homage that was paid by all to him whom she had known in happier days, her mind pondered over the changes that time had wrought in their respective fortunes. The charred embers of Vaucluse, the sweeping away of her husband's fortune, and her own, through the freeing of the slaves and the ravages of war, and the consciousness that at this very moment when, stricken with illness, he was behind prison bars, all told her that she, in her turn, must now face poverty, misfortune and the bitterness of a harsh struggle for existence. On the other hand, he whose lot had once been so lowly and so much less fortunate than her own, was now at the pinnacle of human fame. It seemed impossible that the awkward, friendless lad of the days at Maysville, could be one and the same with the martial figure who, sitting at the right of the President of the United States, was now reviewing the legions under his supreme command. Truly it was one of the strange vicissitudes of fate, that had brought her here at such a time and to witness such a scene.

CHAPTER XXXVI

"AND THE GREATEST OF ALL IS LOVE"

It was a cold night in December, 1865. The city of Washington lay wrapped in a mantle of white. Outside the snow was still falling and only those were abroad that stormy, blustering night who were called out by errands of mercy or necessity.

At his desk, that evening, within the grim walls of the War Department, sat General Burton, working away long hours, after every one else had gone for the night. The duties and responsibilities of his great office had made it necessary for him of late to work until midnight in order that the labors of one day might not be carried over into the next. Only his negro servant was with him and he stood guard in the outer office patiently waiting until his master should be ready to return once more to an apartment in a distant part of the city. Within the room where the silent soldier sat the grate fire burned brightly, casting its cheerful glow around the richly furnished office wherein the commander of the American army gave audience to those whose business was of sufficient importance to demand his personal attention. Somehow that night it was difficult for him to

keep his mind on the routine work that lay spread out before him on his desk, and when the clock struck nine, he withdrew from his desk and seated himself in an easy chair before the fire. There, cigar in hand, he sat musing, immersed in thoughts which did not relate to the machinery of a government which rested so largely upon his shoulders. It was difficult to realize, as one gazed at that face so full of dignity and serenity that it was the visage of one of the greatest "sons of battle," the master-mind and spirit in the greatest war of modern times.

And as he sat in thought on that winter's evening, there was a noise as of some one entering the outer office and in a moment his servant entered with the statement that "two gemmen and a lady was jus' outside, and the gemmen had sent in dese yere kyard, wid de request that dey might see the General jus foh a minute."

He handed the card to his master, and then waited in respectful attention for his master's instructions. General Burton took the card in his hand and read thereon the names of two politicians of note and prominence of that day, leaders in the Democracy of postbellum days. He instructed his servant to bid them come in.

As the two visitors entered his room, he arose and greeted them and then courteously requested them to be seated. "We will only detain you a few moments," said the elder of them, a tall, eagle-eyed individual, who represented the state of Indiana in Congress at that time. "We are here in the service of a lady, sir, whose husband has had the misfortune to be confined, by order of the President, in Fort Warren at Fortress Monroe. I am

informed, sir, that the prisoner is by no means a stranger to you. I called here in the interest of General Brett, who is the gentleman to whom I refer, and I am undertaking the task at the request of his wife, who is now in the reception-room outside. With you permission, we will withdraw and ask her to tell her own story. She has come here, however, at our suggestion, not her own. We feel that General Brett's imprisonment in Fortress Monroe is not only—considering his serious physical condition—a cruel piece of injustice, but we believe it to have been wholly unwarranted in law. For the General was included in the terms of your stipulation with Lee at Appomattox, and his arrest is in direct violation of that agreement. Will you permit Mrs. Brett to be heard in behalf of her husband?"

Whatever the tumult of emotions that may have been secretly passing through the heart of the one thus addressed, neither by word or look did he betray them to his visitors. In so far as anything they might have observed was concerned, the ordeal through which he was now passing, might just as well have been the most ordinary piece of routine business imaginable. He merely said—in perhaps a slightly lower tone of voice than usual: "I am at the lady's service, if she desires to speak to me."

The visitors retired and for a moment he found himself alone. Now the cares of the nation and the responsibilities of a soldier are forgotten. The general has disappeared, and in his place stands from out the shadows of the past the lover of the long ago. In his dreams, when he had wished that he might see her once

more, he had contemplated no such meeting as this. Even the partial explanation of the purpose of the visit given by the gentlemen who had accompanied her, did not serve to explain fully the object of it all. Why had she appealed to him instead of to the President? He could not even surmise, except that he knew that she must have encountered some unexpected obstacle which in some mysterious way he was to be asked to remove. The emotions of his youth and early manhood, which had long lain dormant, sprang into life in a moment, and the man, whose imperturbability amid the stress of battle had excited the wonder and admiration of the world, now found himself completely unnerved at the thought of standing in the presence of a woman.

He stood for a moment looking into the fireplace, with his back to the door by which she would enter. He gazed at the flames flickering here and there, apparently absorbed in thought. At the moment, the door opened softly and almost hesitatingly there entered into his presence the woman between whom and himself, there stood the barrier of nearly twenty intervening years of silence and separation. As he turned and looked at her the floodgates of memory were unloosed and he gazed searchingly into the features of the mature woman before him, from whom he had parted so long ago. Yes, it was the woman of his dreams, who now stood before him in the flesh. She still possessed the silken brown hair, the clear white complexion—almost pallid now, it is true—and the eyes as beautiful as of old. Only the figure was changed. It had lost some of its girlish lines, and there was a sadness about her which told, as

plainly as words, of suffering, and deprivation and sorrow.

And this night was to be the climax of their two lives, both her heart and his told them that. The meeting under such extraordinary circumstances was to open wide the story of the life each had led since they parted nearly two decades before. His life had had but one love dream and he wished for no other. The face that he saw that night was of a woman whose present and future lay solely in the past. Save in the sadness of her expression, and in the maturity of her face, she had changed wonderfully little in all those intervening years. And as he gazed into her face there came to him a vision of the past.

He saw again a young girl, fair of face, smiling beneath her head of soft brown hair, dressed in white, and blending well with the lights and shadows about her. He inhales once more the scent of the pine and the odor of violets as he had done years before, as they stood together that night on the moonlit bank of the Hudson. And as he looked at her more closely he observed that she wore to-night, as she did then, a bunch of violets. Manlike, he wondered if it were mere chance that this was so.

She was the first to speak:

"General Burton, you better than any one else, can understand that had my errand been other than one of life or death, I would not have intruded myself upon your presence. My story you have heard in part from the kind friends who have so generously aided me, and who have urged me to come to you here to-night.

"Last spring, my husband—General Brett—a one-time member of the Confederate Congress, but at the close of the war a brigadier-general in the southern army, and one of the officers paroled by you at Appomattox, was imprisoned by order of President Johnson in Fort Warren, over six months ago. He was charged, with Jefferson Davis and others, of being guilty of treason against your government. He had not violated his parole when he was arrested and imprisoned, and he is lying at this moment on a bed of sickness brought on by his confinement in prison. I left his side only three days ago, and the physician of the prison told me that if he were not immediately released, he would never leave the prison alive. Through the kindness and friendly aid of powerful friends, I obtained only yesterday an audience with President Johnson and asked him for my husband's release. At first he refused. Then, at my earnest entreaty, aided by the generous efforts of my friends—Republicans of great influence as well as Democrats of eminence—I obtained the coveted order directing the Secretary of War to discharge my husband from custody. Accompanied by friends, I only this morning presented myself before Secretary Stanton and handed him the order of the President of the United States, directing the authorities at Fort Warren to release General Brett from custody. And, General, Secretary Stanton tore that order of President Johnson's into pieces in my face and would have turned on his heel and left me standing there alone, had not my friends interposed with the request that he hear from my own lips the story which led up to the giving of

that order by your President. I told him my story, and he heard me through without interruption, but when I had finished, he said, with a pitilessly brutal look on his face, 'Mrs. Brett, in this department I am supreme. I shall not obey the President's order, calling for the release of your husband. This, madam, is final.' He then turned his back on me and without another word I walked out of his presence.

"I did not know what to do, and hope, which up to that moment had burned so high in my breast, was dead. It seemed indeed as if God himself had forsaken me in my hour of trouble. I did not know where to turn next. My very soul seemed crushed to death. Just then—when the way seemed so dark, and I felt I must prepare for what would soon come, one of my friends—himself a member of your Congress—said to me, after we had walked out of the office of the Secretary of War: 'Mrs. Brett, there is one man in this world, and only one, whose order will be obeyed, even by Edwin Stanton, Secretary of War to a President whose orders he—a sworn officer of the government—refuses to obey. We will now appeal to Cæsar.'

"Wondering and wholly in the dark as to what my companion could mean, I asked him to explain. This he promised to do later. When we were by ourselves, he offered an explanation of his remarks in these words: 'Mrs. Brett, if you can induce General Burton to issue the same order that you obtained from the President, I give you my word that it will be obeyed even by Mr. Stanton, for the General is to-day, in truth if not in name, the real ruler of this nation. His hold upon the

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people is supreme. He is their idol and no man dares offer him such an affront as Secretary Stanton has just offered the President of the United States. Edwin Stanton—even though he dare tear the order of the President into pieces in your face—dare not say no to the "Man of Appomattox".'

"When my friend offered this suggestion, General, he did not know, nor does he now know that you and I had ever met before. Nothing but the extremity of my need could have forced me to come to you, asking such a priceless favor from your hands. I know full well I have no right to ask it. But in doing so, I ask you to forget the past and look on me merely as a woman who is in deep trouble. As one, who in her weakness, has come to you in your strength. Things have changed greatly since those early days when we knew each other in our youth. To-day it is mine to ask and yours to give, if you will."

She paused now and waited for him to speak. "My friend, you cannot know what you ask. Let me tell you a story of two lives, part of which is known to you, but in which there is much that you have not heard.

"Years ago there came to a village in Kentucky a young girl who was gentle, kind and good. Her lot in life was cast among a proud race, rich in this world's goods and bearing one of the proudest names known to the Old Dominion. By the merest chance as it were, there touched the broad circle of her life the narrow one that belonged to a poor country boy from a frontier western farm. This lad found himself all but friendless and at times homesick and forlorn even among the rela-

tives with whom he lived. Slow to make friends, his lot among strangers, was one not to be envied.

"Out of the kindness of a generous heart, this girl chose to befriend this awkward, friendless lad, whose lot in life was so different from her own fuller and happier one. The lad had been born among the poor, and he knew not the meaning of luxuries. Indeed he bade fair to die without experiencing any of those advantages that mean so much to those who appreciate and know how to use them. Unknown to the girl, she awakened in his bosom the first spark of ambition that had ever found lodgment there. Through her unconscious instrumentality there arose within him the wish to be something better, stronger and greater than that which his own circumscribed environment was likely to produce. She opened to him the gates of opportunity just wide enough for him to walk through its threshold into a higher and broader life. In some mysterious way, in helping this friendless lad she had won not only his confidence but his love, as well.

"When he entered upon his fuller life at the great military academy provided by a kind and beneficent government he met there one whose life was destined to cross and recross his own during the long years to come. The two were classmates and circumstances made them rivals when otherwise they might have been friends. The one was gifted, handsome and brilliant. All the cadets looked up to him as one whom nature had destined to be a leader of men. The other lad, to all appearances, possessed none of those qualities. They had not been long together as schoolmates before they

discovered that they both loved the girl of whom I have spoken. Then commenced a struggle to win her favor. In their studies and in their appointments as cadet officers the older of the two, the Southerner, outstripped his rival in every way.

"But soon came Commencement week, and with it a great riding contest when the Northern lad was victorious over his rival in a contest at which the girl herself was present. Then it was for the first time that to the winner in this contest came the thought that he might some time aspire to the hand of the girl whom both even then had learned to love. Later he visited her in this very city where we are to-night and there spent what were, in many ways the happiest days of his life. In after years, they with the later ones spent with her at Kentucky were destined to seem like a dream—too happy to have been a reality.

"Then came the Mexican War, in which both of the young soldiers, Southerner and Northerner alike, participated. Here again the former came out of it with perhaps greater honor and a higher promotion than his rival. They then returned home to ask in marriage the hand of the girl they both loved. This time it was the man from the North who won success, and secured from the woman of his choice the promise that some day she would become his wife.

"At this time, by one of the strange dispensations of Providence, both he and his rival were ordered to duty on a frontier post on the Pacific coast. Here the Northern officer served in the same regiment with his less fortunate rival for more than a year. To both the

life in that far distant garrison was irksome and disagreeable, but to none more so than to the Northerner. It was to him a land of fog and mist, a dreary prison cell, from which he longed to escape. To the Southerner fond of social life, and relaxation, the onerous duties of his post were easier because of the presence there of these diversions. Not so with the other, who cared little for all this."

At this point the speaker paused a moment in his long narrative and his voice assumed a lower key as he proceeded:

"So far, all that I have related has doubtless served merely to bring back to your mind events with which you are perfectly familiar. My justification for so doing is yet to be told. For what I have already related, is but a light prelude to the more somber story which I am about to tell. Like most of his fellows, the Northern officer of whom I speak, had his weaknesses, and among these was a not inordinate love of strong drink. Added to this, was a somewhat extraordinary inability to indulge this appetite even to the smallest extent, without coming more or less under its influence. According to the infallible belief of others, he should have left the cup entirely alone, but it suffices to say that in this one instance, at least, he failed to live up to the high standards prescribed by those who were ever willing to sit in judgment upon the failings of their fellow men. The story of this man's fall, is neither pleasant to tell or hear. So I will pass it over as briefly as possible. He drank on one occasion a very little extraordinarily strong liquor, which he now knows was bought and of-

fered to him for the express purpose of making him intoxicated. It had the desired effect. Those present who should have befriended him at the time, took the utmost care to see that nothing should prevent his going to his post while in a condition which precluded the possibility of his properly performing his duties as a company officer. It was all timed perfectly to accomplish this result. The officer of the day, a Captain Cass, who under ordinary circumstances, would have found abundant excuse for not reporting the circumstance to headquarters, was bribed beforehand, to promise to report the offense to the colonel in command of the post. Unlike most of his promises, this was kept. 'Drunk while in the performance of his duty as an officer of the United States army,' was the charge preferred against him.

"Here again the masterhand of the one who had conceived this skilfully executed plot, to ruin in the eyes of the world, but more particularly in that of his betrothed wife, the reputation of the one against whom it was directed, was revealed. The commandant of the post was the most notorious and vindictive martinet in the entire army. Instead of visiting upon the officer a light punishment, as he might have done, he gave him the alternative of being publicly disgraced, through the medium of a court-martial, or of resigning from the army. In the face of such a situation there was only one thing for the officer to do, and he did it. He of course handed in his resignation, to take effect a few months later. The resignation was accepted, and the Northerner left the post, an ex-officer of the army.

"Then came the long tedious journey east, where he was to take up with a heavy heart the burden of a new and untried career. He took a steamer going to San Francisco, from which port he hoped to embark for the East. The ex-officer, without means and even without clothes to go among men of his own station, was compelled, on his arrival in San Francisco, to put up at a sailors' boarding-house, frequented only by the roughest and poorest characters. What his thoughts and sufferings were in the attic room which was given him in that cheerless hostelry none but he can ever know. Perhaps you can guess in part at least what his thoughts were? He sat down in a carpetless room, and tried to face the future. It was, indeed, dark. There seemed to be no light, no hope. His means of livelihood, his profession, his good name even, seemed to have been lost. He was a failure, in the world's eyes, from thenceforth a mere bit of human driftwood to be buffeted hither and thither on the great sea of life until wearied of the struggle, he would let go and sink beneath the surface, to fight and struggle no more.

"But even these things—precious as they were to him—were as nothing compared to the loss of the woman that he loved, which came as a result of the unfortunate affair. At the time when he needed her most she turned from him, as if she, too, was willing to share the verdict, which the world had passed upon him—disgrace and failure.

"But I will not weary you longer with the story. Perhaps as you know the other characters of this story so well you may care to know the name of the man who

so cleverly wrought the downfall of the officer whose life-story you have listened to so patiently. Shall I tell it to you?"

She nodded a mute assent.

"It was the man for whose unworthy sake you have called upon me to-night. It was in truth the prisoner of Fort Warren. How do I know it is so? It was told me in the jungles of Panama by the man whom General Brett used as a tool, to carry out his deliberate purpose of ruining me, that he might thereby win you. By one of those mysterious chances, that sometimes happen in this world of ours, it fell to my lot to nurse and care for this same Captain Cass, while in his last illness on the Isthmus. On his death-bed, when stricken with the cholera and about to face the Great Judge of all, he told me in part the story to which you have listened to-night. There is not in my mind the shadow of a doubt as to its truth. Do you still ask me to intercede in General Brett's behalf?"

There was no answer to his question. The scene, with its attendant revelations, had been too much for the woman before him. His visitor was sobbing bitterly. With the loss of self-control, her emotions had now obtained full sway over her. As he gazed at the figure of the woman who had once been so much to him, now all but broken in spirit and body before him, his voice became strangely soft and tender.

"My friend, it grieves me sorely to see you suffer so. I never dreamed of telling you of all this, had not your errand here to-night forced it from me. But I could not refuse the only request you have ever made of me in

all these years without telling you now my reasons for so doing."

She had stopped her sobbing now, and looked up at him with a wonder-questioning look in her face.

"Why did you not either write or tell me this—until it was too late?"

"Do you need to ask me that question? Had I done so, my motive would have been misunderstood, and it would only have resulted in more unhappiness for you. Neither would it have restored to me my own. Your last letter had told me in terms not intended to be misunderstood that you were never to be mine. Your reasons were such that never, in this world, could things be made right again between us. Only in God's good time would you be made to see and understand."

"General, I came here on an errand of life and death, and I must carry it through to the end. I ask you to think of the man who is dying by inches within the dark, damp walls of Fort Warren. As certainly as we stand here to-night he will surely die, unless he is released from there at once. Whatever injury he may have done you in times past, I ask you to forget and forgive, and in the name of common humanity, procure his release from that place. You can do it. They have told me that you can. Tell me that you will."

Her voice rang out clear and supplicating in the stillness of the night and her eyes burned with a brilliancy that was unearthly.

But he saw them not. He arose from the chair wherein he had been seated during the interview and approached her own.

"Who has the right to appeal to me in behalf of Carl Brett in the name of common humanity? With such creatures as he there is only one fit law to apply, and that is the old Hebrew one, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.' It was his 'humanity' which drove me from a livelihood and an honorable profession to the garret of that desolate sailors' boarding-house in San Francisco, where I read the letter which told me that your way and mine lay forever apart. If I could but portray to you but a small part of what I endured and suffered in that spot you would not appeal to me in the 'name of humanity.' Within the bare walls of that cheerless abode, I suffered the tortures of the damned. I saw that night crumbling around about me the hopes and aspirations of a lifetime. The honors of youth, the joyful anticipations of days to come; the anticipated realization of our life together were transformed in a moment to ashes. The cold dark waters of the 'Bay' upon which I looked from my darkened windows that night knew more of 'humanity' than Carl Brett ever dreamed. For they would have given oblivion. It was his act which made me a human derelict for seven long years. To him I owe it, that I was compelled to sell cord-wood in the public market in St. Louis, that I might have bread to eat and clothes to wear. Do you think the vision is not seared into my very soul of his leading you forth, his bride, from your father's home in Washington, while I stood outside in the bitter cold and night and watched him carry away as his own, that which was dearer to me than life itself? And now, can you still ask me in the name of 'common humanity' to

save the life of him who ruthlessly took all the joy and beauty out of mine?"

A moment's silence, and then came these words in reply to his:

"Friend of my girlhood, for to-night I am going to bare my woman's heart before you and lift the veil that had hidden me from your sight all these years. One afternoon in the long ago, upon the summit of a great rock overlooking the Ohio Valley, on the very spot where I had talked with him as a friendless country lad ten years before, a bronzed veteran just from the battle-fields of a foreign war offered me his love. The music of that sweet day still lingers in my ears, what he offered—I oh, so gladly—gave in return. We parted, expecting soon to meet again, and take up the journey of life together. Instead of that, we had parted destined to take up a life forever apart. Only one who has suffered the pangs of heart-hunger and disappointment in things that are closer to a woman's heart than life itself, can know what it means to have lost such a love as had once been so wholly mine. Scarcely a night has passed since that time, when there has not come to me out of the darkness the voice of that love, which though lost, was heaven-born. It has been no more possible for me to blot all this out of my inner life and heart than it would be for you to forget your Appomattox. Unknown to you, I sat, a spectator, on that first day of the grand review at Washington and watched 'my soldier boy' as, transformed into the great military leader, he received the plaudits of a world which had once passed him by in silence and con-

tempt. I was proud of him that day, even though I had no part or share in it all. I shall always be an outsider now, destined only to stand outside and catch glimpses of happiness, as now and then the curtains are raised, that I may, even so dimly, see the joy and happiness inside. And now that I have reserved nothing, when all has been said that you have listened to to-night, I ask in the name of the love that you once bore me, to sign the order which shall free, not Carl Brett, but my husband from a prison cell."

Unconsciously the man dropped back for a moment into the past.

"Sallie, you can scarcely know what you ask. Do you realize that my signing this order may raise an issue between Stanton and myself, which may even force me to tender my resignation? Is it likely that he will do for me what he refuses to do for the President of the United States?"

"My friend, my faith in you never faltered, but once, and please God it shall never fail me again. I believe with all my heart and soul that you will sign this order, because you are great and noble, and good and true. Just as truly do I believe that Secretary Stanton will obey your order in this instance, not so much because you are the idol of the American people, and he dare not offend you, but because he, like yourself, can surely be depended upon to do what is just and right."

There was a pause and then the man spoke again:

"At such a time as this there can be no concealment, for there is too much searching of hearts here to-night for that. Sallie, during all these long years, I have

been faithful to the love that was yours once and is yours now. Have you been equally faithful to yours?

And now he had finished speaking, and waited expectantly for her response. And then the woman, whose eyes had been lowered as he uttered these last words, raised them until they looked full into his, and then rising from her seat, spoke again:

"I shall speak to-night as a woman and not as a wife. Now that you have opened once more your heart, let me open my own in return. When I came here I little dreamed that I should speak these words to which I now give utterance, but they are wrung from me by the story of this great love that has been kept safe for me alone, all these years. I speak now, strong in the belief that in so doing, I can do no harm, only good.

"Have you ever guessed or felt what you have been to me all these years by your tenderness, your patience and your nobility? All speak to me with indescribable power. As I have traced to-night the lines of sorrow on your brow, as I have come to a full realization of the loneliness of your life, of the devotion to duty, of your unswerving loyalty to an ideal, so different from my own, I can no longer remain silent. Think me unwomanly if you will, but you shall know the truth.

"When I married Carl Brett I knew that I did not love him as a woman should the man to whom she would entrust her all, but I thought that love would come as the years went by. Family, friends, and a foolish girlish ambition all favored the course I took, and so I married him, thinking that time would make it right. The past is my best friend as the future is yours. You

belong to the nation, I to one who is bound to me only by his present weakness and helplessness."

The experiences of this night were too deep for further utterance. She ceased speaking, and turned as if to go out. As she moved toward the door, he left the fireplace before which he had been standing and came forward and took her hands. For a moment they stood looking in each other's eyes. Neither spoke. Then the man saw in hers the love-light, and he knew that the love that had been given him long years before was still his. She loved him still and had loved him all these years. Truly the heart of a woman is a mystery, too deep for man to solve.

When he essayed to speak, the lips of the woman trembled and she raised her hand as if to stop him. Momentarily she pressed her hand to her throat, as if for breath. For an instant it appeared as if her emotion would overcome her. Then with a quick movement she recovered her self-possession and spoke:

"The story which you have told me to-night is in some ways the saddest which it has ever been my lot to hear. Many things which have been dark to me for many years are now made clear. The light has broken through at last and I no longer see things darkly. I have listened to-night to one of those life tragedies whose very utterance has brought me pain. The victory has been yours, the defeat mine. The same tide that commenced to flow so long ago and swept you out upon an unknown sea has brought you back to safety. And why? Because you were strong enough to stem it, when it would have carried you out upon it as a derelict

in its treacherous arms. There—had you been less strong—you would have remained, buffeted by every wind that blows, merely drifting while others passed you on the way to fame and fortune.

"And what can I say to you, dear friend, about him who has brought so much that was evil upon you? If he was pitiless, for that reason you will show mercy, for the 'merciful are the children of light.' Tell me, friend of my heart, that you will grant my prayer?"

It was a study indeed to see the man's face at that moment. There was evidently a struggle going on between the baser and higher emotions that struggled for the mastery at times in his breast. At length that which was noble and good and true in the great chieftain conquered, and he said to the still beautiful woman before him:

"Yes, Sallie, your request shall be granted, in so far as it lies with me to grant it."

Then, stepping to the desk, he wrote for several moments and then handed to her the historic letter directed to Edwin M. Stanton, calling for the liberation of General Carl Brett from imprisonment at Fort Warren, which read as follows:

"Brigadier-General Carl Grimke Brett is included in the terms of General Lee's surrender at Appomattox Court House. He will be released upon giving the proper bond, and I will see that this order is carried into effect. Let him be discharged."

Then adding to it his familiar signature, he gave it

to the woman before him, who received it with trembling hands. She essayed to speak, but failed. She dared not trust herself to attempt to utter all that was in her heart. She held out both her hands to him, and he held them for a moment in his own. Then without a word, other than a whispered good-by, she vanished forever from his sight. The next day the order was delivered to Secretary Stanton, and this time it was unhesitatingly, if not gracefully and willingly obeyed. One day later Carl Brett was a free man through the gracious clemency of his former West Point classmate, General Burton, now commander of the National Army.

CHAPTER XXXVII

FINIS

One afternoon in the late summer of 1866, a man still in the vigor of middle life, drove a handsome Kentucky thoroughbred along a traveled Ohio roadway, which leads inland from the river which bears that name. To the few farmers who gazed at him as he passed them rapidly by, there was something about him which seemed strangely familiar and yet, as they expressed it, "he must be a stranger in these parts." Unaccompanied, he drove rapidly on, until he came to a farmhouse much run down, but evidently occupied by some tenant who had drifted thither in recent years. Hitching his horse he stopped for a moment to gaze long and earnestly at the old farmhouse and then stepped to the half-open side door and knocked. A woman, dressed in a neat blue calico gown, came to the door and inquired his errand. Briefly he stated to her the fact that this place had been his boyhood home, and that he wished, with her permission, to revisit some of the spots that had endeared themselves to him in his early years.

Regarding him with ill-concealed curiosity, she gave the desired permission, of which he was not slow to avail himself. Leaping easily over a rail fence which barred

his progress, he proceeded to climb once more the steep slope of Girdle Tree Hill. The summit of the hill once attained, he gazed around, with feelings of almost boyish pleasure! "The cattle on a thousand hills" were there, solemnly chewing their cud, on the slope of the wide-spreading buckeyes. In the distance could be heard the tinkle of bells. Fields of wheat and corn waved in the breeze, green meadows sloped as far as the eye could reach, one and all suggestive of the life that had been his in the long ago. As the shades of evening commenced to steal upon him, he fell into one of those dreamy, pensive moods, which come to one only once in long intervals of years. As he gazed with moistened eyes upon the familiar scene, which he had revisited after an absence of many years, it seemed to him as if his youth and manhood, like dual personalities, had suddenly come face to face with each other once more, after a long separation. The dreams of his boyhood had vanished; the disillusionment of the "forties" had taken their place. It is only a brave man who can look his past in the face without flinching. If he have not cause to blush with shame at some unworthy deed, there is almost sure to be cause for a sigh of regret at the thought of lost opportunity or wasted endeavor. But to the man who stood, that late summer evening, on Girdle Tree Hill, there was neither emotion. His thoughts at this vesper hour were on other things. This visit to the scene of his boyhood years had brought with it a train of thoughts which held him for a moment not only captive, but spell-bound, as it were. The wonder of it all, which had long since burst upon others,

now for the first time was revealed to him. Out of the deep purple twilight of an August day there came visions of the past, which he alone of all the millions in the land, could call his own. What others only dared dream of, he had lived. What to all save him alone was a tale out of the Arabian Nights, was to him but a page out of his own life history. Could it all be true? Was the barefooted urchin of Girdle Tree Hill out of the same mold as the victor at Donelson? Was the youth who ploughed, only three decades ago, yonder field of corn, the forerunner of the matchless strategist at Vicksburg? Was the stolid schoolboy at Maysville the originator of that brilliantly conceived and perfectly executed battle at Chattanooga? Could the quiet and sensitive cadet at West Point be the prophecy of that grim and wonderful warrior of the Wilderness? Is that friendless and pathetic figure of the What Cheer House in San Francisco, one and the same with that one, around whose presence now clustered the wondrous halo of Appomattox? Yes, even so. That solitary figure standing there in the twilight represented in his own person all these apparently diverse but really identical personalities. Surely the forces which had wrought together to produce this "Man of Destiny" could only have been found within the borders of the one great Republic. There alone such material on which these forces might work could be found. And only in an unshackled democracy, could such a career have been made possible. Conceived under the protection of an all-wise Providence, born of a race which is the dominant one in the world to-day, he only needed the preparation and

the opportunity to come into his own, as one of the great characters of any age or clime. Both had been given him, not as he would have had it, but as a higher Power had willed it. That he was a truly great character, called of God to lead his people through the smoke and carnage of war, into the sunlight of perpetual union, dawned on others long before it did on the man himself. Duty, not ambition, was the mainspring of his character. And while following the path of duty, wherever it might lead, he one day found that the path of duty ran side by side with that of glory, until at last they were the same.

This evening, as from his vantage ground on the hill-top he wondered over it all, he realized that he no longer belonged to himself. That from the day he received from the kindly hand of the martyred Lincoln that great commission to save a land from disunion, and while saving a land, to save a brave people from themselves, he belonged no longer to himself, but to the nation. Then, unconscious of the act himself, he brought his hands together three times, as the great Southern leader had done on that memorable day at Appomattox, when the gray uniform as such was laid away forever. This little touch of human weakness seemed to bring him out of the revery in which he had been for the last hour, and he now strode rapidly in the direction of the farm-house. Once arrived there, he was greeted by a strapping young farmer—the master of the home—who had returned to the house while he had been resting on Girdle Tree Hill. He held in one hand that of his little son of seven, while in the other he

grasped an oil lamp. He gave a start of awesome recognition as his visitor's countenance stood revealed beneath the light of the lamp. The latter now spoke.

"Would it be demanding too much of you, sir, if I asked permission to visit the attic room overhead? I used to sleep there as a boy," he said simply, by way of explanation.

The young farmer quickly granted the desired permission, and still leading his little son by the hand, he escorted him up the steep stairway that led to the little room above.

The visitor cast one look of absorbed interest at the humble quarters, which he had known as a boy. Then, turning to the little lad whose eyes had followed his every movement, he stroked his hair and put in his chubby hand a shining piece of gold. "That is for luck, my little man. Some day, when you get older, you will sleep here, where I used to sleep years ago, when your father was no larger than you. And when that day comes, I don't want you to forget the 'other boy' who used to sleep here then."

And now, with a word of thanks to the young farmer and a courteous word of farewell to the mother, who had now appeared on the scene, he passed out into the darkness.

"Papa, who was that man, who gave me this penny?" said the little lad, as the door closed behind the late visitor.

"That, my child, was the next President of the United States."

THE END

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